

Regarding: HB4153

Co-Chairs Helm and Owens, Vice-Chair Finger McDonald, and members of the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water:

My Name is Valerie D. Verkerke and I am a COMMUNITY MEMBER in Coos Bay. I am writing to you today to express my opposition to HB 4153. Farm stands are a vital part of connecting the public with our food system and building an understanding of what it takes to go from field to fork. But HB 4153 would restrict who is allowed to have a farm stand, replace current definitions with Farm Stores, and give large land owners privileges at the expense of small farm stands in Oregon. We need to find a better solution.

I care about this because here in Oregon the face of farming has many different forms.

I frequently go to a farm stand that would not meet the acreage requirements in section 2.2 of the bill.

Why should a small farm be any less legitimate than a large farm? Small farms need to have the same opportunities to sell their produce as larger farms.

There are several vendors at the Coos Bay Farmers' Market who are trying to make a living by selling from their VERY small plots. Why is there a need to define and restrict the size of a farm?

We are trying to grow the economy in Coos County and make it a more desirable place to move to and flourish, not put more restrictions on legitimate opportunities that will only depress our economy and morale further.

As a Master Gardener I am out in the community meeting people who are farmers and gardeners who trade, or sell overabundant crops. If you determine their farms are "too small" these interactions may disappear. Donations to the Library and Food Bank may disappear. As a senior, if I needed to sell vegetables to supplement my income, where would I be?

What picture would you be painting for the youth of our community? Many people here might have to start small, but let's encourage younger people to follow dreams (or family tradition), see value in this place, and want to **remain here** to chase a creative and successful idea that will push Coos County forward in the future.

We are asking you **not** to place a higher burden on the smallest farms. This bill takes away opportunities from small land holders and farms in order for larger operations to be able to host more events. This is not a good bargain for Oregon, especially in these shaky times. A better deal must be found.

Thank you,

Valerie D. Verkerke
Coos Bay