

Submitter: Liza Ehle
On Behalf Of: Valley Flora Farms
Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4153

I understand the DLCD and statewide planning goals to protect agricultural land, but, like the limitation on farm events (pumpkin patches and wine tasting, etc.) and this proposed limitation on farm stands is misguided. You are missing the critical component of farm product marketing and sustainability in the current world. The "opening up and mixing in" of farmers with the public is both educational, supportive of both farmer/consumer and critical to augmenting small farms' incomes so they can maintain their land in production year over year. Smaller farms thrive only on these small seasonal direct to consumer and the consumer values the chance to find farm-fresh products and support small farming. The diversification of both seasonal and publicly accessible products is critical for their incomes in a business that can be highly labor intensive and devastated by pests and weather. An event, a farm stand, a hay ride or a U-pick may be the only thing that carries the farm in the off-season or a bad crop year, and can be the only avenue to make it profitable. Additionally, the opportunity to engage the farmer, hear their story, see where our food comes from, buy fresh produce, pick our own, or do a farm-to-table cultural event is so rich in community building and integrating farming back into our culture that it meets every goal Statewide Land Use priorities outline for access, conservation and preservation. With community supported agriculture (CSA) being a proven successful model for food production in rural area, these are critical to all of us away from big box stores who want fresh produce, eggs, fruits and keep it local with minimal transportation and maximum nutrition. Many of the farms accept SNAP, donate to food pantries, allow gleaning and provide educational opportunities for school children through field trips, events and activities like strawberry or blueberry picking. Please, do not approve this bill or limit farms engaging the public directly through either events or farm-stands no matter what size or type of use they need to continue protect and maximize our agricultural Oregon landscape.