

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 Ellie Grimme, and I am a hobby farmer and gardener living in rural Eugene. I am writing today to support HB 3372 to allow those with a 1/2 acre garden to offer produce and farm products for sale. The law as it stands is arbitrary, outdated, and not based on water conservation. If an individual can grow a 1/2 acre lawn or garden for personal use, or use up to 5,000 gal/day for commercial use, then that person should have the choice to sell surplus goods from their garden.

Our 5 acre parcel is unique in that, despite many of our neighbors having strong and plentiful well at a relatively shallow depth, our well is restricted at 2 gallons per minute due to the weak flow. We practice water-wise gardening and we truck in water to service the small orchard we planted 3 years ago until the trees can be dry cropped. Even with our meager well we still grow more fruit and vegetables than we could ever eat ourselves off of our drip-irrigated garden.

During the COVID-19 pandemic we took over the care of our neighbor's garden to grow additional fresh produce for their family and local food banks. Now we find ourselves on the precipice of yet another economic crisis that threatens our nation's farmers, and I ask myself, what can we do? A friend of ours who manages a local grocery store is concerned not only that they will encounter supply chain issues moving forward, but that the cost of food will rise so greatly that the community won't be able to afford it. There is no true profit to be made off of our small garden composed of raised beds. Even if we could cultivate every inch of a 1/2 acre we would likely still not be able to pay ourselves, but feeding a neighbor is much more rewarding than watching the grass grow.

Eating local is good for the consumer, the environment, and the community as a whole. The OWRD estimates that residential wells are only using 4% of the ground water being pumped in the state. That small fraction is unlikely to change much just because we allow the sale of a few apples or onions, but it would mean a lot in terms of what we are able to reinvest in feeding our community.

Please pass HB 3372 and give communities back the ability to feed and provide for themselves.

Thank you,  
Ellie Grimme  
Eugene, OR