

Submitter: Gavin McFarlane

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3372

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 Gavin McFarlane and I am a farmer and farmworker from Salem. I am writing today to support HB 3372. Currently in Oregon it is legal to water a ½ acre garden or use 5,000 gal/day for a commercial purpose, but neither of those apply to growing food and farm products for sale. Why is it legal to use the water for personal use, to water a lawn or fill a swimming pool, but not to grow produce to sell and feed my community?

As a long time farm worker seeking to start my own agricultural venture, this restriction has proved to be a substantial barrier. Accessing land with water rights has proved insurmountably expensive and I've had to turn down available land that is perfectly suited to my farm projects specifically because there are no preexisting rights. With access to even a ½ acre irrigated legally from a domestic well, I can start my business and build the equity necessary to acquire further capital to expand my operation, bring on employees, and eventually purchase acreage with water rights. Removing this one small but significant barrier will allow myself and many others the opportunity to provide food and jobs to our communities while being fairly supported for our efforts. Beginning farmers such as myself are presented many challenges and restrictions. Allowing irrigation for commercial agriculture on a ½ acre is both reasonable and feasible. The passage of HB 3372 could make all the difference in our abilities to support ourselves and our communities.

Thank you,
Gavin McFarlane
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Salem