

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 Andrea Hasbach. I am an owner of a small farm in Pleasant Hill, Oregon. My husband and I bought this property to create a better life for ourselves, as well as to try and give back to the community in which we live. I am a veterinary specialist who works full time in a multispecialty veterinary clinic in Springfield, OR, and he has a background in production agriculture. His dream has been to run a small sustainable farm that can not only help feed our family, but also supply healthy fruit and vegetables locally. I am writing today to support HB 3372. Currently in Oregon it is legal to water a half-acre garden or use 5,000 gallons of water each day for a commercial purpose, but neither of those apply to growing food and farm products for sale. We have been told that if we wanted to have a local car wash and use our well water in this fashion it would be permissible. If we wanted to raise livestock that would be permissible. We have been told if we wanted to use that water to grow our own food that would be fine, too. However, if we grow it and sell it then it is illegal. To continue the pursuit of his dream my husband started the process of applying for water rights, and while he was told he can apply, he was also told there isn't really a point as the application will not be approved. Why is it legal to use our well water within the stipulated limitations for personal use, livestock, or car washes, but that if we produce and sell a basket of tomatoes or a Halloween pumpkin it is illegal? This restriction is irrational and arbitrary.

Prior to knowing this was illegal, my husband started his first year off small with a planting of Halloween pumpkins. He was conscientious of his water use, and went as far as to not only lay down plastic mulch over the rows to retain water around the plants, but also individual drip lines so that water was not wasted. He calculated the overall water use and was far below the stipulated limitations that were published online. He successfully grew 60 varieties of specialty gourds and pumpkins and opened a small scale sale during the month of October 2023. In the short time he was open for sale he met neighbors, as well as those looking to visit a local business to purchase their fall pumpkins. They were excited, very pleased with the variety, and he was able to share his knowledge about the varieties and their uses. Then he received notification that he was in violation of our use of water, and that if his sales continued there would be legal repercussions.

It has been heartbreaking to watch his attempts to be a contributing member of our community thwarted, and the effect this has had on him. He truly just wants to use his gifts to be able to provide a service that there is a need for. We have a barn that we could turn into a small farm stand for our community, and that is a pipe dream if we cannot be

granted a reasonable water use exemption or have a reasonable expectation of gaining an acre of water rights. Beyond that, this has also personally impacted me because it has limited my husband's ability to pursue his gifts and dream in an area that can also support my career. I cannot be a veterinary specialist in a more remote or rural area, and he seemingly cannot perform small scale production farming in an urban-adjacent region even with the well our property possesses.

I realize that we need to be realistic and responsible about what we prioritize for water use in our state. I also realize that allowing small scale commercial production to grow food or farm products with a gallon restriction on half an acre will not jeopardize our water supply, especially given that the current estimate is that this represents only 4% of the water drawn from private wells. Currently, Oregon agriculture is diverse, encompassing over 225 agricultural commodities including grass seeds, greenhouse stock, potatoes, and hazelnuts. There has been a decline in the number of farms and farmland acres in Oregon, and while these losses have been offset by a gain in total sales, this is largely coming from large scale production. Some counties in Southern Oregon are putting a growing emphasis on small farms, with programs like the Southern Oregon Small Farms program working to improve the economic and environmental sustainability of small farms in Jackson and Douglas counties. I would like to see this in our community too. We are a diverse community, and large scale production is important, but small farms give communities back the ability to unite, bond, and provide for themselves. With our community in mind please pass HB 3372.

Thank you,

Andrea Hasbach

Wife of Chad Herrmann; owner of Edenvale Gardens

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