

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 Rachael Ward and I am a community member from Eugene. I am writing today to support HB 3372 with Amendment -5. 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, but selling a single zucchini from my garden would mean I was breaking the law?

This personally impacts me because my access to local, small scale farms is impacted by this limitation. There are several farms and gardens in my local area of south Eugene that have been affected by these restrictions. I have seen their ability to sell their delicious, nutritious produce to their neighbors completely halt in the last year or two due to enforcement of these restrictions. There are several farms that had farm stands or sold at farmers markets that no longer can legally sell their products. Eugene and the south Willamette Valley is a rich agricultural area, with more small scale farms per capita than anywhere else in the country. Placing illogical water restrictions on these small farmers will harm the ability of our community (and the entire state) to be self-sufficient and resilient to changes to the national and global food systems.

My support of HB 3372 is not antagonistic to concern and care for the water resources of our state and the entire planet. I believe that it is right and important for there to be limitations and regulations on water usage. However, the restrictions put on small farmers on ½ an acre are unnecessarily strict. Instead of punishing our small scale producers, who are often the most responsible users of water, we should be examining water restrictions on large scale, corporate factories, industrial farms and other main polluters.

We need to be realistic about what we prioritize for water use in our state. Allowing people to grow food or farm products for sale with a gallon restriction on ½ acre will not bankrupt the system, and farming is too much work for people to rush into production on such a small scale. I urge you to give communities back the ability to feed and provide for themselves by pass HB 3372-5.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rachael Ward".

Rachael Ward
Eugene, OR 97405