

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 Debra Christofferson and I am a community member in Burns, Oregon. I am writing today to support HB 3372-5. Under current law 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 would the state of Oregon, which has long promoted its farmers markets, local food scenes and small farmers, choose to now penalize those who simply want to contribute to their local food system and earn a reasonable wage by doing so? Where is the support for keeping the miles food travels short and the carbon footprint small? Why keep local individuals, who have the capacity and the desire to do so, from adding to the resiliency of their community by offering quality food items?

I am personally impacted by this, as are most Harney county residents, because we live in an extremely rural region and have very few options for fresh produce. There is a single Safeway, a Grocery Outlet and a handful of convenience type stores that serve the entirety of our population. As we have all learned in the last few years, our supply chain is fragile. We can make our communities more resilient, stronger and healthier by giving the opportunity to small local growers to contribute to the system at a local level. Also, by having the possibility of a multitude of growers, we diminish the impact of failure because that risk is spread out to more than one entity. There is great potential strength, for our state and all its citizens, in diversity of quality food avenues..

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. The solution in this bill does not increase the overall water available for exempt use, it simply allows people to sell the food and farm products it is already legal to grow. Give communities back the ability to feed and provide for themselves, pass HB 3372-5.

Thank you,

Debra Christofferson
71500 Turnout Rd
Burns, Oregon 97720