

Testimony

HB3372-5 Need for Sale of Small Farm Produce

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 Dr. Lauren Oliver. I am a concerned community member from Ashland, I am writing today to support HB 3372-5. Currently in Oregon it is legal to water a ½ acre garden or use 5,000 gal/day for a commercial purpose. Yet 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 tomato from my garden would mean I was breaking the law?

This personally impacts me because as a community member, I know that 95% of the food we eat in the Rogue Valley is imported from elsewhere. If we experience a crisis – of weather; an earthquake; a financial crash; major road blockage – we could experience food scarcity in very short order. This is my more long-term concern. As of now, I have seen a drop off in local farmers' market vendors. Foods I have been eating for a decade are no longer readily available.

In addition, the benefit of having small farms in our area enables selection and adoption of crops and foods which grow more readily and sustainably in our local ecology.

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 back to our communities the ability to feed us and provide for themselves. Please, do pass HB 3372-5.

Thank you,

Dr. Lauren Oliver
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