

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 Laura, and I am a farmer and community member from the Salem area. I am writing today to support HB 3372-5. I appreciate you all taking the time to review this important proposed amendment to the language on domestic well use.

Water is one of our most important resources here in Oregon, and we should all be extremely mindful of how it's being used in our daily lives. As you are aware, it is currently legal to water a half acre garden for personal use or use 5,000 gal/day for a commercial purpose in Oregon, but neither of those apply to growing food and farm products for sale. With this proposed amendment, small-scale farmers across Oregon would be able to grow and sell food and farm products without increasing the amount of water currently allowed through a domestic well, which I think is a brilliant and rational way to increase food security in our local communities and potentially create new jobs (often in our more rural communities) without increasing allowed impact on our precious water resources.

Recent changes at the federal level are already impacting how our local communities can access and afford food and farm products. In the cut flower industry, the national organization Certified American Grown estimates that 78% of the cut flowers sold in the United States are imported from overseas. Already, tariffs have increased prices in the floral industry, which impacts our local communities when they celebrate the big and small moments in life, including weddings, funerals, and holidays. There is a huge opportunity for our local farmers to help meet that demand and increase our market share with locally grown flowers and foliages. This is a type of farming often done on a small scale, so this amendment could allow farmers more options in where they are able to farm.

Farming is a vocation, and while it comes with so much beauty and benefits, it is one of the hardest career paths and lifestyles around with countless barriers to entry to this field, including land access. We certainly are not going to see a drastic increase in the number of small farms in Oregon through this amendment because the same amount of hard work is required in farming regardless, but this amendment will help those who are serious about pursuing this field to have more options as to where they set up their small farm businesses and then help provide food, farm products, and potentially jobs for their local communities.

Protecting our water resources is so important, and 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 a half 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, which in turn has the potential to strengthen our communities and make them more resilient in the longhaul. How incredible would it be if communities throughout our great state had the ability to feed and provide for themselves locally

without creating additional allowed impact on one of our most precious resources? HB 3372-5 is a smart step in that direction—please pass it.

Thank you,

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