

Submitter: Macey Wessels
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1153
June 4, 2025

Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Bonham, Members of the Senate Committee on Rules:

I am writing to express my opposition to the -5 amendment to SB 1153. This bill could be devastating to our farmers and their ability to produce some of the highest quality crops in the world. Our farm grows grass seed, mint, and we bale grass straw for export. All these commodities help grow our Oregon economy. I have significant concerns about the -7 amendment and the base bill and its impact on all our family farms throughout the state.

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As we head into a future where new water rights are no longer available, SB 1153 threatens agriculture's last remaining tool (water right transfers) for efficient water management including adaptation to climate change, making irrigation system improvements, addressing drought, and adjusting to changing market conditions.

SB 1153 will establish new transfer evaluation standards that will significantly slow the transfer review process and stymie water management flexibility and water use efficiency for farms, ranches, irrigation districts and other agricultural water suppliers across the state.

Rather than simplify SB 1153, the proposed 37-page amendment that raises more questions than it answers, still creates new vague standards for an undefined problem, and will hamper the use of transfers—the most valuable mechanism for moving water to when and where it is needed most for all beneficial uses.

I am concerned that SB 1153:

- The bill is being rushed through the Legislature with little stakeholder engagement or time for stakeholders to review.
- Language around review standards is vague and creates significant risk of litigation to those seeking a transfer.
- The proposed policy is inequitable, exempting out municipalities and targeting agricultural producers.
- OWRD is ill-equipped to handle added work when they are already backlogged and seek to increase water user fees by 135%!

By adding more superfluous layers of bureaucratic review, the bill would have a chilling effect on the efficient use of water throughout our state through the threat of litigation from activist third parties.

The bill is not ready for primetime. I urge you to reject SB 1153 and the -5 amendment.

Sincerely,
Macey Wessels
Owner, Macey Wessels Farms
Scio, Oregon