

Chair Jama, Vice Chair Bonham and members of the committee:

My name is Cheryl Martin.

I am submitting testimony in strong opposition of Senate Bill 1153. I am a sixth generation rancher in Eastern Oregon. I am blessed to now have my 7th generation sons and eighth generation grandchildren farming and ranching in this valley. Our valley has become highly productive with myriad crops, hay, and cattle because of smart, efficient and conscientious irrigation practices. The 1909 water rights have been a successful method of water management for our high desert area as well as the state of Oregon. They absolutely should not be altered and that includes not allowing the changing of the current ability for water transfers. SB 1153 is vague and over reaching with duplicative mandates. It is very subjective and will have dire consequences for agriculture. It gives broad latitude to OWRD to make unsubstantiated denials or conditioned determinations on water transfers based on a "may result" impact to fish habitat or water quality. I can tell you no one cares more about water usage and water quality than generational farmers and ranchers who depend on it for their livelihoods and for food production. Senate bill 1153 is flawed in so many ways. It eliminates the flexibility to legally move water for best farming practices, it disallows innovation, it adds to the already overburdened agency, it is a litigation risk for the ag industry and there is no accountability. We do not need more bureaucracy wrapped in the guise of misleading environmental protection. There is no proof that water transfers harm the fish or water quality. This bill is also unfair and unequal by targeting agriculture but exempting cities from the same rules.

It is discouraging that this bill with the new amendments was hurriedly created with very little input from the agriculture industry that depends so heavily on water usage to produce food, provide vast amounts of jobs, support our communities, and continues the generational wisdom and culture that exists but is sadly on a dramatic decline. Please read through the testimonies and understand the heartfelt knowledge about the detrimental effects that SB1153 will have on this very important sector of the state of Oregon. This knowledge comes from those of us who work on the land daily and know firsthand how best to manage and take care of water. It comes from the farmers and ranchers that understand the differences of water needs across this vast diverse state.

We must not and can not push this harmful SB 1153 through. Common sense must and should rule the day.

Thank you
Cheryl Martin