

Submitter: Chris Beck

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4153

House Ag and Nat Resources Committee Members:

I served in the Oregon House a generation ago and have followed the land use system since the 1980's in various professional and civic roles, including as staff for the Senate Ag and Nat Resources Committee. HB 4153 is wrong-headed and more complicated than presented and should be tabled until 2027 when a more thoughtful and strategic approach can be devised.

HB 4153 is counter to the Governor Kotek's legacy of promoting infill development in our towns, as embodied in HB 2001 enacted several years ago. One of the state land use system's primary benefits has been to promote redevelopment of our town centers and Main Streets with housing and commercial enterprises. By opening the door to further commercial enterprises in farm zones, you will, unwittingly, lower economic growth and jeopardize local vibrancy efforts in our existing town centers, many of which are struggling economically. Agricultural products from our farms should be celebrated in storefronts in our Main Street districts

Governor Kotek's staff are not giving her good advice. And they are jeopardizing one of her core legacy achievements--HB 2001. I worry that staff and the Governor, and possibly the Committee, are being duped by the so-called property rights groups (aka land speculators) who are using this seemingly small new exception to continue their enduring efforts at undermining Oregon's nationally celebrated, and unique, and highly effective, agriculture conservation system. This bill is one of those sneaky ideas which sounds good, and plays well to busy and distracted legislators, but in fact harms one of the best state policies on the books.

Expanding commercial markets on farms is the wrong approach. Instead, the Committee should be exploring ways to incentivize agricultural sales and related activities in town centers in a way that will generate intensive economic vibrancy, rather than the diffuse hodge podge approach envisioned in this bill. Table this bill and focus on more weighty matters this short Session.

Chris Beck