

Submitter: Mary Kessinger
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
Measure, Appointment or HB4153
Topic:

Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Mary Kessinger, and I am a resident of Washington County. I am writing to express my support for HB 4153. While I am not a farmer myself, I am the wife of a farmer and part of the extended family that helps support and sustain Plumper Farms, which operates in Multnomah County. I am also someone who deeply values the role working farms play in our communities across the region.

My husband has spent most of his life helping operate our family farm, and I became involved in 2019. Since then, I have seen firsthand how much work and balance it takes to keep a small family farm sustainable. For our family, farming is not just seasonal work, it is our livelihood and something we hope will continue to support our children and future generations.

Farm experiences like those offered at Plumper Farms provide much more than agricultural products. They give families a place to connect with where their food comes from and keep important traditions alive. For my children, being connected to a working farm has helped teach responsibility, respect for the land, and an appreciation for agriculture. Preserving these spaces helps keep farmland in use instead of being lost to development.

I also strongly value the opportunities farms provide for young people. Many farms, including ours, offer high school students their first job experience, helping them build real-world skills like teamwork, accountability, and customer service. These experiences also help strengthen the connection between rural and urban communities.

It is frustrating that outdated laws can make it harder for farms to offer common-sense experiences like field trips, seasonal activities, or simple weather protection for visitors. These activities help farms stay financially stable while creating safe, welcoming environments for the public.

I support HB 4153 because it provides a balanced and practical update to farm-use laws while still protecting Oregon farmland. The bill maintains important guardrails to ensure properties remain actively farmed while still addressing community needs like traffic, parking, and noise.

Small family farms are an important part of Oregon's identity and economy. Please support HB 4153 so farms like ours can remain sustainable and continue serving Oregon families for generations to come.

Sincerely,
Mary Kessinger
Washington County, Oregon