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Co-Chair Helm, Co-Chair Owens, Vice-Chair McDonald, and members of the committee,

My name is Sarah Sullivan and I am the Executive Director of Gorge Grown Food Network, based in Hood River. I urge you to vote no on this flawed bill. HB 4153 opens the door to reckless development of exclusive farmland and strips away opportunities for small farms.

Streamlining the process for farmers to sell directly to consumers through farm stands and farm stores is important. However, HB 4153 is not the solution and would erode exclusive farm use land protections. Specifically:

- The sole purpose of a farm stand should be to sell agricultural products, and this bill removes that requirement. Agriculture must remain the predominant use of farmland for regional food security and rural economic viability.
- A 10,000-square-foot “farm store” sounds like a loophole for non-agricultural development. This type of event space should be located in an urban area, not on farmland that can never be cultivated again once developed.
- Events on farmland should be limited in number, size, and scope. I support weddings, farm-to-table dinners, and other farm events within reason. Turning 55 acres of a 100-acre “farm,” with only a few acres of hay, into a concert venue is not designed to support working farmers or preserve farmland.
- Smaller farms under 10 acres have a right to sell directly to consumers through farm stands. The poorly written language of this bill would make that impossible for some small farms and require more burdensome applications than those required of larger farms. The proposed amendments do not remedy this discriminatory structure.
- Neighbors should be consulted about development next door. This bill eliminates good-neighbor practices and long standing rural practices in Oregon.
- Unchecked development of farmland increases the cost of land regionwide, making farmland access and farm sustainability even more difficult than they already are.

Gorge Grown Food Network’s mission is to build a resilient, inclusive local food system that supports the health and well-being of our community. For 20 years, Gorge Grown has supported farmers and farmland preservation, and we ask you to do the same. Vote against HB 4153 and hold space for a solution that works for everyone to preserve farmland and support working farms in Oregon.

Sincerely,
Sarah Sullivan, Executive Director

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