

Submitter: Rebekah Clifton

On Behalf Of:

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

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4153

My name is Rebekah and I am a very small farmer in Elkton. I am writing to you today to express my opposition to HB 4153 as it is written and the -2 amendment. Farm stands are a vital part of connecting the public with our food system and building an understanding of what it takes to go from field to fork. But HB 4153 as it is written would restrict who is allowed to have a farm stand, replace current definitions with Farm Stores, and give large landowners privileges at the expense of small farm stands in Oregon. We need to find a better solution.

I believe that access to food is a human right. We all have the right to grow our own food. Buying, selling, trading and bartering that food should also be a basic human right.

Plants and animals that feed us require land, water and sun to grow, and the cost of land is critically high. When we force people onto small pieces of land and then limit their freedom to legally buy and sell food with their neighbors in the smallest farm stand situations then I call that a terrible abuse of a vital human right.

I do not have 20 acres of land, and I am in the early stages of building infrastructure to grow our farm. I am not alone in that. There are many people like me who struggle to cover the costs and put in the work to grow their own small garden, with dreams of doing more to support their community.

We need our leaders to see us and our small, local communities. We need our leaders to support our ability to provide for our neighbors.

I will never be able to compete with large farms, and I will never be able to support my family from income from a farm stand or agritourism.

My contribution will not be measured in millions of dollars of GDP.

But the contribution of small farm stands is so much more than the garden produce, eggs and baked goods. While it's true that small farm stands can provide healthy food in food deserts, I believe that even more importantly - farm stands can build friendships. Small farm stands can allow people to feel seen and heard, improving both physical and mental well being of our neighbors.

I believe we should be encouraging all of our neighbors to get outside and dig in the dirt. Grow flowers, raise bees, bake a loaf of bread. And let's rebuild our communities with these smallest acts of humanity.

We have to do better in Oregon. The smallest farms need to be allowed to flourish without the burden of legal restrictions that large farms have been exempted from.

This bill takes away opportunities from small land holders and farms, in order for larger operations to be able to host more events. This is not a good bargain for Oregon and a better deal must be found.

Thank you,

Rebekah Clifton  
Elkton, OR