

Farm Stand Testimony
Verdant Phoenix Farm



Co-Chairs Helm and Owens, Vice-Chair and members of the House Committee

My Name is Rhianna Simes from Phoenix, Oregon. I am a 3rd generation farmer-. I am the owner, an lead farmer of Verdant Phoenix Farm- we are a regenerative, diversified, certified organic farm here in southern oregon. I am here to **express my opposition to HB 4153.**

I grew up on a 100 acre vineyard and peach orchard in Central Texas with a farm stand - that is where I worked my first job, selling produce on the side of the road. It was a defining experience- since the age of 10- I have been working to be able to own and operate my own farm with a farm stand- in hopes that my children will also want to sell produce . I believe that the best thing I can do for my community is to grow healthy, organic food.

We purchased a blank piece of land where all the infrastructure had been burned to the ground in the 2020 wildfires. My generation knows that in our rural area, that the options to access markets for our farm products are limited -especially while we are scaling up:

- brick and mortar is too expensive with too much overhead
- farmers markets require a lot of different products, time to sell them
- wholesale markets- require a lot more, consistent access to product

Interestingly, I agree with a lot of HB 4153 - except for the limitation for micro/small farms **I oppose the new eligibility requirements based on acreage in production or sales for farms to even apply for a farm store permit.**

I am a farmer with 9.8 acres with a creek running thru it - a lot less than 20 acres- however, HB 4153 says that we have to have 10 acres in production or show \$10,000 income for 2 years- to EVEN APPLY for a farm stand. This creates unattainable requirements for any farmer under 10 acres to even apply for a farm stand. We are not a tax doge farm.

So, while farmers like myself are investing in the infrastructure needed to farm - for example last year we spent over \$12,000 on irrigation infrastructure alone - while we are making capital investments. In 2025 our farm sold about \$2,000 worth of products- we are proud of this

- a lot of work for beginning farmers to get the infrastructure established- and to then be able to sell a product at the same time. Farm stands help beginning farmers to scale up.

Oregon needs more beginning, micro and small farmers. We are hopeful the FOFF amendment will help address our concerns.

So, this means that even while we make investments, scale up, create relationships with buyers - it will be at least 3 years before we could even apply to operate a farm store? Why?

HB 4153 is asking beginning farmers to go from starting a farm to generating \$10,000 of income?

I am not asking for a discount or a handout - we want to work hard, grow food, and sell it in our community. I have no problem with the current restriction to 25% income from fee-based events and incidental items.

HB 1453 is crippling to our small business, and it is debilitating for our small farm of 9.8 acres - which are exactly the types of businesses that rural communities WANT MORE OF - not less.

Over the past several years Oregon has seen positive benefits from:

- direct investments that support local food - help the economy, families, and health
- small rural businesses bring much needed revenue to geographically isolated areas
- farm businesses require A LOT of start up money - the more farmers diversify the better
- farms are going out of business at a record rate, the more local farms, and beginning farmers is better for Oregon

I don't sell shirts, or a product that I can generate in a day and turn a profit the next. My business requires years of capital up front investment, it requires starting small to generate income so we can survive to the next phase of scaling up so we can access markets.

Every person I have talked to about this - says "Why would they do that, that hurts the little guys" or "this makes no sense"

Please remember my story and my justified opposition to HB 4153.

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