

Submitter: Michelle Gregory
On Behalf Of: The Worthy Jacob Farm
Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4153

I urge the committee to bench this bill for its lack of substance around fiscal, environmental, and infrastructure impacts and its scalable threat to actual, productive farm land statewide. As a small fry, legacy farm operator in the Columbia Gorge NSA, with a GGR5 zoning designation, surrounded by farms & forests with EFU designations, I can attest to the challenges of working farmland preservation at the small to mid scale, in a tightly regulated region with immense growth pressure. We host a high volume of agritourism and adventure tourism in the western Gorge for 6-7 months of the year. These are also our growing & harvesting months. We host some of the most valuable soils in the country and we are expected to operate as timelessly scenic & pastoral while also pacing with every trend that progress & tourism serves up. We abide erradic climate change, ice season, fire season, wind that reliably gusts in the 70's for days. Farming and investing in Oregon EFU zones is not for the fast money speculator or the porfolio manager aiming to "build it so they will come". Yet this bill exposes our resource economy to exactly that. The proportions of acreage offered up for "farm stores" injects a new tier of development intensity for the EFU zone, which by design, jump starts the urbanization process requiring full service infrastructre. Check goals 11 & 14, PLEASE, before proceeding further.

I can assure you that farmers of all farm sizes in Oregon, are threading their own regulatory needles and contending with economic hardship to achieve their goals for balancing peak production with responsible stewardship of soil, water, air, flora and fauna. And through our rational, cyclical urban growth review process, and related codified zoning regs, we hold one another accountable for growth realities, opportunities and impacts to neighboring farms, forests, public facilities, homes and businesses. Whether we work 2, 10, 80 or 1000 acre parcels. We are all struggling to meet very tight margins and resist ill-considered urbanized encroachment onto our productive agricultural spaces. We do not possess the capital leverage to shield Oregon from private equity aggregators who come with very little knowledge of or committtent to the Oregon Way. We do rely on farm gate sales and farm gate ethics, on both sides of the gate. And we help each other.

This bill does not embrace the challenges of Oregon's farming community. It does not advance market certainty for many farmers, though for a few, it positions them well for land coversion/cashing out. Farmers deserve retirement & their bite of the apple, but that is a policy quest for another forum. This bill may be the right hammer for some nails out there, but its a crushing tool for most. And its frankly not necessary.

HB 4153 seeks to circumvent a statewide system that addresses our natural, built and infrastructure needs pretty fairly and comprehensively, with regular review. Please don't advance this bill. It is not fully developed enough to meet the moment for most of us. And thank you for staying true to Oregon statewide planning goal #1 - Public Involvement

I can appreciate the grievances with existing farmstand regs & farm gate enterprise. But this bill flips the script so that farm stores of a significant proportion in terms of land use consumption - ensure ROI for land aggregators. To me this seems like a back door urbanization strategy. I don't see how this initiative will address the squeeze that major commercial activities would put on neighboring productive farms. How does the infrastructure necessary for commercial activity fit into the framework of soil preservation, water & air quality and best practices for animal husbandry? I appreciate farm tourism..but it's got to be done responsibly. We should not make every farm a playground for urban visitors, should we import inauthentic product to prop up Faux Farm inventory. Oregon can do better than this. Thank you