

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

I am a first-generation, beginning farmer and am writing to ask you to oppose HB4153. We live and farm on just FIVE acres of EFU land. We are currently investing in and building infrastructure and restoring soil organic matter and selling at farmer's markets while we work on scaling up our production of vegetables and fruit. We have always believed that someday we would add a farm stand or some on-site aspect of to our farm once our farm was mature enough to do so.

Speculative development of farm land is already taking place all around us in Washington County as builders tear down small houses and build multi million dollar homes listed immediately for sale with "views" on EFU land, making it harder for beginning farmers to afford even marginal farmland and land without water rights. HB4153 will only further the speculative development of farmland, and does absolutely nothing to help small farmers who want to be a part of building a resilient, local food economy. HB4153 will result in farmland being paved over for parking - irrevocably removing it from production. HB4153 would allow large landowners to develop commercial buildings on farmland without having any real farm activity behind it, while it places restrictions on small and new farms instead of providing them with opportunities.

I am very supportive of small farms of any size, with farm stands, of being able to sell other local farm products as long as the majority of the sales of the stand come from their own farm. I regularly stop at other farms' stands and often buy both the farm's products, as well as those of other farms that they are selling. This is important - consumers don't have time to travel to 10 different farms to do their grocery shopping if they are trying to buy farm direct products, but maybe they can stop at one. It is also important for farmers who don't make a living off of what they grow, but need an outlet to sell. We need more small farms, more new farmers, more part-time farmers - we need more ways for it to be easier to buy local Oregon farm products. We DO NOT need more farmland paved over or soil compacted for parking. We DO NOT need to make it harder for new farmers to have access to land. We DO NOT need to give extra commercial opportunity to large landowners.

I have been to one concert at Topaz Farm. I did not learn anything about agriculture while I was there. I was horrified by the number of cars driving over and compacting what looked to be arable land with high organic matter and water holding capacity, as well as arriving and leaving the countryside at the same time, and shocked at the use of water to keep the concert lawn green all summer. This sort of activity should not be

allowed outright on farmland just because the tract is large and there is a claim of agritourism and a farm store. If a farm is operating as a concert venue and that is its main source of revenue - is it really a farm?

Small farms on small tracts are the ones who need that extra bit of revenue that actual agritourism - actually engaging the public and teaching them about agriculture - might provide to make the farm's financials work.

Please support small farms. Please oppose HB4153.