

Submitter: Teresa Retzlaff

On Behalf Of:

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

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4153

Co-chairs Helm and Owens, Vice-chair Finger McDonald, and members of the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources and Water:

I am writing to express my opposition to HB4135 as it is currently written, including the -2 amendment. The bill as written clearly favors larger farming operations over smaller and beginning farms like mine, and I ask that the bill either be further amended to address the unfair burdens it places on smaller farms and beginning farmers, or that it be voted down. I am not asking that additional burdens be placed on larger farms, just that the unfair burdens being place on smaller farming operations be removed.

I have farmed on the Oregon coast for over 20 years, and currently farm on an 18 acre property that is zoned Ag/Forest where approximately 2.5 acres are under agricultural production. Most of the property is wetland and inappropriate for crop growing, and we have to fence to protect crops from elk and deer, which is expensive, so smaller acreage production on this land is what works for us.

We have farmed here for 15 years, and although we could now meet the financial income threshold required by this bill, when we were first starting out we would not have been able to, and it would have been devastating for our new farm business. And, why are we asked to prove an income threshold when larger farming operations are not? If the USDA considers me a legal farm with only \$1000 of farm income, why does this bill demand proof of a higher income than that?

There are so many other small farms along the Oregon coast that will be adversely affected by this bill, farms that will be unable to meet either the acreage restrictions or the income restriction—or both—especially when they are just starting out. Our farming population is aging out—do we really want to make it harder for people to start farming in Oregon? It does not make sense that smaller farms should have a higher burden to meet than larger farming operations in order to make income from their land.

I cannot believe that Oregonians want our vibrant small farms to be negatively impacted in this way. If this bill cannot be amended to remove the unfair burdens it places on smaller farms and beginning farmers, then it should be voted down.

Thank you.

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