

I own and operate Central farms in Terrebonne Oregon. My operation started small, growing wheat and potatoes and later adding seed crops and hay to my rotation to support my young family and paying the farm expenses and taxes associated with owning a business in this state. I worked endlessly, taking side jobs, yet fell deeper into debt. The economics of farming have never been easy, with expensive equipment, fertilizer, increasing labor costs, additional rules, regulations and taxes, there's a reason only a few chose this career.

In 1998 I grew 15 acres of pumpkins for the local stores on rented ground and opened my field to the public. Without any other pumpkin patches in the area this became popular in the first year, attendance grew as families shared this pleasant experience. Three years later we moved to our current farm and added the corn maze and other farm related activities, which increased the number of visitors and consequently helped us purchase this farm. This became a place thousands of families know as Smith Rock Ranch and visit during October.

I am a first-generation farmer, starting with only a college education and hard-earned farming experience. I grew up in Portland delivering newspapers and mowing lawns until graduating from Benson high school. Paid for my own college with farm wages during the summers, then working for several years in a farm-related career before venturing on my own.

As Smith Rock Ranch became more popular, Deschutes County was working through the new rules around Weddings and wineries in rural areas and didn't know how to address agritourism. Without clear, workable rules, they cited me with code enforcement on my farm, which rapidly turned into a quagmire for the staff at Deschutes County planning department. With tremendous public support in my favor, they were motivated to issue a farmstand permit.

The current rules create more confusion than solutions, especially as the dynamics of farming evolve, rule makers and operators need to adapt as well. I was told decades ago the possibility of starting my own farm was slim, and today has become increasingly more impossible as land values and input costs increase while farm commodity prices remain near the cost of production. Starting small is the best chance for a new farmer to begin, which is possible with direct farm

marketing, something that is opposed by several groups, one claiming to have a 1000 friends, the majority of which aren't farmers. Why shouldn't the necessary regulations be developed by those trying to survive in this overregulated state? Oregon allows dispensaries on every corner but makes a big deal about a family buying a pumpkin and riding a pony at my farm. Agritourism is allowed and encouraged in the other 49 states and other countries, but the rules in Oregon are toxic from the extreme influence of environmental groups which infiltrate our government and create catastrophic wildfires that destroy lives and the beauty they portend to protect!

I've lived in this state and worked my entire life, supporting my family, paying every flavor of taxes available, providing jobs, economic benefits and memories for the community and beyond. And honestly, I'm tired of making this much effort to retain my current job. Not necessarily from the field work, but from meetings and legislative hearings, and writing testimony to justify my continued existence. Salem needs to decide if they want agriculture to exist or if it should be returned to a natural state and hire farmers to make it look pretty.

HB 4153 makes sense to the farm operator and allows us to continue providing a valuable opportunity for families to spend a wholesome day together, posting pictures on social media to memorialize the experience. As an example, this bill simplifies the 25% sales cap requirement which is currently difficult to interpret and enforce. There are sensible protective restrictions that don't require excessive oversight and audits for compliance yet allowing us to service the needs of our guests.

I'm likely the first and only generation to operate this farm. As my children have watched me struggle with regulations, they have all chosen alternate careers. While this senseless regulation of every aspect of farming in Oregon continues, the question remains whether there's an opportunity for someone to carry on. The answer lies upon those writing the rules in this state, and I ask your consideration on this matter by supporting HB 4153 as written.

