

Submitter: Carolyn Stein
On Behalf Of: Food for Lane County
Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4153

Co-Chairs Helm and Owens, Vice-Chair McDonald, and members of the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water,

My name is Carolyn Stein, and I am submitting testimony on behalf of Food for Lane County (FFLC), a nonprofit food bank that operates a small farm stand in Lane County. We oppose House Bill 4153 as currently written because it would reduce access to fresh, local food in rural communities and create new barriers for small and community-based farm operations.

Small farm stands play a critical role in rural food security. In many parts of Lane County, they are one of the only places residents can purchase affordable, locally grown products without traveling long distances. Our farm stand exists specifically to increase access to healthy food for our neighbors and rural communities.

HB 4153 introduces acreage and production thresholds that many small farms, nonprofit farms, and beginning growers cannot meet. These requirements would effectively disqualify small-scale operations, like FFLC's, from operating farm stands, forcing some to close or scale back. The result would be fewer local outlets for fresh food and fewer pathways for small growers to reach their communities.

At a time when food insecurity remains high and rural grocery options continue to decline, Oregon should be lowering barriers to local food distribution, not raising them. We respectfully urge the Legislature to amend HB 4153 to:

Preserve a clear, accessible pathway for small and low-acreage farms to operate farm stands.

Ensure farm store policies prioritize direct sale of locally grown food.

Recognize farm stands as essential infrastructure for rural food access and community resilience.

Until these changes are made, we ask that you oppose HB 4153 as written. Thank you for your consideration and for your commitment to Oregon's farmers and families.

Respectfully submitted,
Carolyn Stein, Executive Director

Food for Lane County