

Co-Chairs Helm and Owens, committee members, and staff,

My name is Kathryn Jernstedt and I live on the Jernstedt Century Farm in Yamhill County.

This letter is in addition to the 90 seconds of testimony given in person at the hearing February 9th. Our farm was established in 1891 by Swedish immigrants, Frank and Anna Jernstedt. We have endured innumerable ups and downs by taking the long view. Once profitable crops and market conditions change so farmers learn from resources like the County Agents, OSU, and trade associations and adjust accordingly. When things require additional income to “keep the farm” someone “gets a job in town” to bridge the gap – not unlike the two income families of today.

Land Use is a complex subject and the bill is far ranging in consequences. Not a suitable matter for a short session. We strongly oppose HB 4153 for many reasons. Some have been articulated but the constraints of short sessions severely limit public participation and put an enormous burden on legislators and their staff to consume written testimony.

There is a process for rule review at DLCD which was ongoing before being shut down in response to a richly funded PR disinformation campaign on social media platforms. The RAC process can be time consuming but effective education, meaningful analysis and debate are. This bill throws out the time and energy put into the initiative by the staff and public.

Farm stands, pumpkin patches, etc. are allowed now under the current rules. Something that many testifying in opposition do not seem to understand. Public education through these outward facing activities has value. However, the activity that makes agriculture the second largest segment of Oregon’s economy occurs in areas protected against parcelization and non-farm uses. The concern about our economy needs to be measured against facts and informed market research. Speculator claims and dreams of the county life do not make it so. The pandemic illustrated the great vulnerability of tourism and hospitality to economic events. As long as we protect our irreplaceable soils, commercial agriculture continues through it all.

Water rights and consumption are ongoing problems outside areas with publicly funded services. They can be readily ignored until it is your toilets that do not flush. There are initiatives with broader benefits to the communities as a whole worthy of support. Like revitalizing rural town Main Streets and addressing food deserts in populated areas.

Please do not advance HB 4153. Thank you for your attention.

Kathryn Jernstedt
Jernstedt Century Farm