

Submitter: Dan Rinke

On Behalf Of:

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

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4153

As a farm-based cider business, this bill has the ability to greatly impact my small business. If anyone can now open a wine or cider business or bar on EFU land without putting in any crops or jumping through any licensing hoops, it will directly hurt my business. We can't compete with investors who want to run commercial events on farm land and don't really care about farming! It's hard enough for businesses like mine to compete with other vineyards and cideries, people who actually do farm. We set ourselves apart by offering unique farm-based agri-tourism. Dollars from agri-tourism are limited, don't make it harder for independent farmers like us to compete with non-farming investors.

We did the hard work to be able to host agri-tourism events on our Exclusive Farm Use property. We raise the fruit and process it right here on the farm and sell it at our agri-tourism events. That is the true intention of agri-tourism, not just having big events that happen to take place on farms. It's about agriculture, not people who pretend to farm while they run an event space. We have farm deferral and land use rules to protect AGRICULTURE, not commercial activities.

If this passes, I think it might actually de-incentivize farms like mine to give up farming and juts run an event space.

We already have Agri-tourism Permit process for non-farming events, maybe they need to be adjusted? But this bill bypasses all regulations- no caps on number of events, no limit on number of people. Someone could run 3000 person concerts 4x a week all summer long or a motocross track with no planning or neighbor input as long as they farmed a portion of their land. If we want to solve for some agri-tourism issues, there are ways to do it without destroying the rules for farmland. Put a cap on the number of non-farming related events, put a limit on the number of people that could come to non-farm related events. Give neighbors a process to weigh in. Adjust the income limits from 25% to 45%. Farms shouldn't be making more money on non-farming related things over actual farming.

This bill will allow for too much unrelated farm activity to happen on our precious farmland. If the legislators are considering moving forward, I urge you to not push it through in the short session. Thank you, Dan Rinke