

Submitter: Barbara Talley

On Behalf Of:

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

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4153

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

My husband and I own a 60-acre farm on the outskirts of Junction City. While there are some aspects of HB4153-2 that would benefit our farm business, I'm writing today to oppose its passage into law. The change from "farm stand" to "farm store" with the attendant, arbitrary acreage and/or income requirements in order to have a farm store, hurts beginning and small farmers. Many small farmers who would qualify for a farm stand under the current law will not be able to have one in the future under HB4153-2. Farm stands have provided an important, low-cost entry into selling farm products that not only give small and beginning farmers access to important direct-to-consumer relationships, but also supply neighborhoods and communities with hyper-local fresh farm produce, meat, eggs, dairy and other products. It's essential that we preserve these outlets and allow farmers of all sizes to participate in Oregon agriculture.

By extension, the passage of HB4153-2 would potentially jeopardize the future of Oregon agriculture by making farmland even more expensive and out of reach to many small and beginning farmers. By allowing large landowners carte blanche to establish a wide variety of commercial activities and products not directly tied to the fruits of farming on their own land, this bill opens up the probability that farm land, especially large acreage, will only be accessible to wealthy buyers who may have little interest in using it for agricultural purposes. Such gentrification of our farm land should be discouraged in order to preserve it for the future and for people who want to produce food for Oregonians.

Finally, the bill as now written removes necessary safeguards to ensure that rural properties fit in with the use and character of their communities. For instance, the bill removes the ability of county officials to deny a farm store altogether, as long as the acreage and income requirements are met. HB4153-2 also eliminates the "good neighbor" analysis currently required for agritourism permits to ensure that events and nonfarm activities don't negatively impact adjacent farms. As a rural resident, I can say that such considerations of surrounding neighbors are very important to me. I don't want to live next door to a concert venue, and amusement park, or even a wedding venue, over which I have no say or recourse to submit complaints should my life experience or farm needs be negatively impacted.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Barbara Talley