



TESTIMONY

House Committee on Consumer Protection & Government Effectiveness

Tuesday, May 26, 2015

Oregon Farm Bureau supports SB 341-A

Chair Fagan and members of the committee:

Oregon Farm Bureau (OFB) asks for your support of SB 341-A. This legislation would provide liability protection to agritourism providers who post certain notices on their property, enabling them to more readily obtain liability insurance for their activities and ensuring that agritourism is supported and encouraged in Oregon.

By way of background, Oregon Farm Bureau is the state's largest general agriculture organization, representing over 7,000 farming and ranching families and 60,000 members statewide. OFB's diverse membership includes farms and ranches of all sizes, commodities, and production methods. Many OFB members provide agritourism services to the public and would benefit from SB 341-A.

Agritourism provides many benefits, including public education about agriculture, the preservation of farm or ranch land, a mechanism to bridge the urban/ rural divide, and the provision of additional income to farmers and landowners. OFB's diverse members operate a variety of agritourism operations, including farm stays, pumpkin patches, and u-pick flowers. Liability coverage is critical to provide certainty to these small businesses, and we believe SB 341-A is a step forward for Oregon agriculture.

SB 341-A is a long-worked compromise that would provide Oregon agritourism operators with access to liability coverage similar to the State of Virginia. Appropriate application of the risk of liability is a significant concern for farmers and others who operate agritourism businesses in the state. Landowners who open their property to the public face the risk that they could be considered liable if a visitor is injured while on the property. SB 341-A would provide liability protection for agritourism providers against certain claims when the agritourism provider posts clear notice at the property of risks



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inherent in engaging in the agritourism activity. Liability protection would be afforded only to those agritourism activities that are authorized under the land use system. With this bill, Oregon would join nearly two dozen other states with limited liability laws for agritourism providers, including Idaho, Florida, and Wisconsin.

Agritourism is one of a diverse set of products provided by Oregon farmers—one that helps a farm or ranch remain viable in both good and bad years. However, without appropriate allocation of liability for agritourism activities, Oregon producers will have a difficult time obtaining liability insurance that would enable them to continue to run their agritourism businesses.

SB 341-A passed the Senate unanimously. We ask for your support for SB 341-A to keep family farms and agribusinesses viable and provide opportunities to grow the agritourism industry in Oregon.

For additional information, please contact: Jenny Dresler or Mary Anne Nash with the Oregon Farm Bureau.



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