



**Testimony on HB 5024
Before the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education
In Support of Increased Funding for the OSU Statewides**

**April 14, 2015
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Founded in 1968, the Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership-based organization. We advance innovative, collaborative solutions to Oregon's environmental challenges for today and future generations.

Dear Co-Chairs Monroe and Komp, and members of the Subcommittee:

I am here today to express Oregon Environmental Council's strong support for appropriating an additional \$16 million to the budget of the OSU Statewides, as reflected in SB 657, to support increased funding for important statewide natural resource public service programs such as OSU Extension Services and Agricultural Experiment Stations. We ask you to ensure that this funding provides critical capacity for:

1. Development of integrated pest management strategies and training,
2. Fertilizer research and education to support plant quality and farm profitability and protect safe drinking water,
3. Implementation of the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) in Schools program, and
4. Research and education in strategies to protect water quality and wildlife habitat.

The Statewide Programs of the Oregon University System- the Extension Service, the Agricultural Experiment Stations, and the Forest Research Laboratory - are critically important to the wellbeing of all Oregonians.

Whether you are:

- An agricultural or forest land manager trying to ensure clean drinking water for people and good river habitat for fish, or
- A parent with a child in a school where school custodians are being trained by Extension staff in Integrated Pest Management to protect kids from unnecessary exposure to chemicals, or
- A rural Oregonian who relies on a well for their drinking water,
- Living in a city that is trying to create development standards to reduce urban stormwater pollution to meet Clean Water Act standards, or
- A landscaping company trying to manage beautiful landscapes while protecting pollinators,

The quality of your life is dramatically improved by the work of Extension and Agricultural Experiment Stations.

We all recognize that in both our region and the U.S., our strength in the future lies in knowledge. Extension and the Agricultural Experiment Station are often the only independent source of expertise that land managers trust for assistance in meeting both their business and natural resource conservation goals. Without this source of expertise, Oregonians will have significant difficulty meeting our goals of clean water, wildlife habitat, and protecting people's health in a way that also ensures a strong economy.

The Extension Service and the Agricultural Experiment Stations are the linchpin that connects a world class research university to all Oregonians and makes sure the knowledge developed is useful and used to improve our lives. Good research generally only happens when it is shaped by the needs of real Oregonians. Otherwise, the research isn't answering a practical need, and may not be usable or used by those it's meant to serve.

OSU Extension and Agricultural Experiment Stations are an effective and essential bridge between urban and rural Oregon. Food and agriculture are the handshake that unites us all. We should be investing more, not less, in uniting Oregonians around the values we share, and our interdependence.

The Statewides' capacity has been significantly reduced over the last 10 years, and current budget recommendations amount to a practical cut to the Statewides budget, as the 3% increase does not cover true continuing service level costs.

Last year, when the OSU Board of Trustees developed a funding request for the University, they recommended a \$16 million increase for approximately 40 new positions to power new and expanded initiatives that combine the strengths of all three Statewides.

We urge you to add \$16 million to the Statewides budget to begin to restore the capacity that has been so degraded to address issues across the state critical to all of our lives: safe drinking water, children's health, strong salmon populations, and thriving urban and rural economies that are more clearly connected with one another.

Please protect the integrity of one of our most important resources in Oregon—our innovation and knowledge base that will enable all of us to thrive and prosper in the future. Please restore capacity to Oregon's Agricultural Experiment Station, Extension Service, and Forest Research Laboratory to support our success as a state and the wellbeing of all Oregonians by adding \$16 million to the OSU Statewides Budget.