

March 2, 2017

Dear Senate Education Committee,

As you have heard testimony today, there is reason to support Agriculture Education and FFA in Oregon. These incredible people are only a few of thousands of examples of the products of FFA in Oregon. They have come from many different backgrounds and industries, all connected through FFA and Agriculture Education. Taking care of our needs and encouraging others to live a quality life is why I am here today, I see the need for Agriculture Education and believe it has never been more important.

Being in Agriculture Education is demanding. Our agriculture teachers are a group of dedicated, hardworking, and motivated individuals. A 1952 federal charter requires a three component model including Agriculture Education, FFA and Supervised Agricultural Experiences. FFA is the largest intracurricular youth organization in the nation, with over 5800 members here in Oregon. These students as you have heard today, work very hard outside of class to build their lives and experiences. They will someday be the backbone of our state's economy, and have already made significant impacts while still in high school. For example, In 2015, student Supervised Agriculture Experience projects had an economic impact of 13.8 million dollars in this state.

A complexity of this three component model is found in funding. Our classroom teachers are paid by public school systems, yet our FFA staff has been privately funded since 2011, and the time required for us as educators to include student SAE's is an area that most school districts address differently and are quite inconsistent from program to program. The state level funding had been severely restricted since the mid 1990's and was included in the Oregon Student Leadership Development Center (SLDC) program as a special grant each biennium. Those dollars had dwindled over the years that it was unsustainable and Industry came into play in 2011. Since then the organization has relied on 1.6 FTE staff, numerous teachers who are working to keep programs going for students,

and volunteers through Oregon FFA Alumni that amounted in 1.59 million in donated time, talent, and monetary resources. Industry has ensured the livelihood of a major component of this organization, and I believe that is a testament to the importance of Ag Ed and FFA to this state as you have heard from today. However to grow and meet the needs this legislation is seeking, it can't be done on the backs of already stretched state and local teacher resources.

This bill will provide for leadership development, remove financial barriers in membership, and strengthen all programs to meet quality standards that are evaluated by industry professionals. What we in this legislation can provide for students are stronger personal experiences in agriculture. This legislation will impact the future ability of an industry to provide basic essential human needs.

Think of all the students we serve in Oregon education. How was their education fed today? Were they pushed to grow? Were they seen as leaders? Was their understanding of science, math, reading, writing and innovation applied in a way that could change the sustainability of our nation? This legislation achieves this and strengthens influence across ALL communities and provides students with a high quality experience in an industry that needs their diverse talents, passions and traits.

Thank you for your time today, and for allowing us to communicate and celebrate the value of Oregon's agricultural education and FFA programs with the examples of our students and supporters shared today.

Sincerely,

Jim D. Cant  
1998-99 Oregon FFA State President  
2000 National FFA Alumni Board of Directors  
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