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To: Joint Committee on Ways and Means Sub Committee on
Natural Resources

From: Bryan Ostlund, Executive Director

Re: Testimony on HB 5002, Oregon Department of Agriculture Budget

The Oregon blueberry industry encourages continuous support of the Oregon Department of Agriculture's plant protection programs, in particular the Insect Pest Prevention and Management Program (IPPM) and the Noxious Weed Program. Both programs play a critical role in facilitating trade, both domestic and international.

Unfortunately, invasive species are on the rise and pose a serious threat to both crop production and trade. Just this past holiday season Christmas trees coming from North Carolina were loaded with a serious pest not known to exist in Oregon.

It's important to all Oregonians that we keep invasive pests out in the first place. It is more cost-effective to be proactive than reactive. Being proactive still requires budget support, reacting to the establishment of new pests costs the State vastly more.

The Japanese Beetle is a perfect example; in 2008 the monitoring program was cut by \$80,000 and pest trapping was greatly reduced, the result is now the largest Japanese Beetle infestation west of the Mississippi River. To make the infestation even more difficult is that the center of the infestation is in Northwest Portland. Attempts to control the pest have cost the State of Oregon millions of dollars and is a public relation nightmare with residents in the greater Portland area.

The Department's noxious weed program has been very successful and shows great return on investment. Twentyfive of the 128 noxious weeds in Oregon cause an estimated \$100 million in economic damage to ag and natural resources economies. Without efforts to manage these weeds and implement biological control efforts, the damage could rise to more than \$1.8 billion every year. Oregon State University has conducted an economic study on Oregon's noxious weed program twice in the past 15 years. No other program that I know of can show this level of economic benefit.



In 2018 Oregon blueberry growers produced more than 131 million pounds of blueberries, obviously the vast majority of those are shipped to destinations outside our State. Oregon's blueberry industry are true global marketers.

Oregon is the only US state allowed to ship fresh blueberries into South Korea, a country with near zero tolerance for pests. It took the industry ten years to gain that market access and now after seven years of exporting Oregon blueberries we're on the verge of losing it because the industry is finding it difficult to meet such rigorous pest standards. Korea is very concerned about the undesirable pests we have here in Oregon hitchhiking on fruit exported to their country. Without an active, well-funded Department of Agriculture these markets would be closed to Oregon producers.

The Oregon Department of Agriculture plays a critical role in keeping ag exports viable. The bottom line is that ag exports bring thousands of jobs and billions of dollars back to Oregon.

On behalf of more than 350 Oregon blueberry growers we ask that you support the Oregon Department of Agriculture's budget and in this example specifically the plant protection programs.

Thank you for your consideration.