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## **Testimony in Support of HB 3090 Beginning Farmer and Rancher Incentive Program**

Chair Clem, Members of the Committee

Friends of Family Farmers represents small and mid-sized family farmers across Oregon. We are writing in support of HB 3090, a bill to create a Beginning Farmer and Rancher Incentive Program at the Oregon Department of Agriculture.

This bill would provide a formal mechanism for the Oregon Department of Agriculture to assist beginning farmers and ranchers in the state consistent with the priorities of 'building a technical agriculture workforce' and 'keeping the next generation of agriculture involved' identified in the agency's 2018-2023 Strategic Plan.

Under this bill, the ODA would establish a program and farmer and rancher eligibility requirements for incentives that would include, but not be limited to: student loan repayment assistance, stipends, and scholarships for those enrolled in agricultural training programs at Oregon colleges and universities. If funds available are not sufficient to provide assistance to all of the applicants who are eligible to participate in the program, the bill allows ODA to establish priorities for the distribution of funds. The bill spells out that the eligibility requirements must give preference to applicants who commit to either producing food for local and regional markets or using organic practices. However, program funding is not limited to those who meet these requirements, it merely established a preference to assist in prioritization when funds are limited.

With the average age of farmers and ranchers in Oregon nearly 70 years old and extensive areas of farmland expected to change hands in coming decades, Oregon must do all it can to assist the next generation of farmers and ranchers. Establishing a dedicated incentive program at the Oregon Department of Agriculture to assist with these efforts is an important step that Oregon should take.

Thank you for your consideration,

Ivan Maluski  
Policy Director