



“Making Every Resource Count”

Oregon Wheat Growers League 115 SE 8th Street, Pendleton, OR 97801 (541) 276-7330 www.owgl.org

TO: Senator Betsy Johnson, Co-Chair
Senator Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, Co-Chair
Representative Dan Rayfield, Co-Chair
Members of Joint Committee on Ways and Means

FR: Blake Rowe
CEO, Oregon Wheat Growers League

Date: March 18, 2019

RE: Funding for OSU Statewides

The Oregon Wheat Growers League is proud to represent the nearly 2000 farm across Oregon that produce wheat, one of our State’s largest and most valuable crops. Wheat contributes hundreds of millions of dollars in direct and indirect value to Oregon’s economy, especially Oregon’s rural economy. Our growers both depend on and faithfully support the work that is done by the OSU Statewide Public Service Programs – our Agricultural Experiment Stations, our Extension Service and the Forest Research Laboratory.

Our growers do their part and more to support our stations and extension staff. Over the last 5 years, we have supported wheat research and facilities at OSU with nearly \$5 million grower dollars. Nearly 30% of these dollars have gone directly to support the Ag Experiment Stations and staff, with the rest going to fund wheat research projects conducted by OSU scientists. This research work has focused on development of new and better wheat varieties, more sustainable agronomic practices, better weed, disease, and pest control, precision agricultural practices that reduce pesticide use and carbon emissions, and many other questions. Over the last 10 years, roughly 50% of Oregon’s wheat production is from varieties developed at OSU and 100% of our growers do their work better because of the work done through Extension and the Ag Experiment Stations.

The Statewides are as critical to our growers as any other form of Oregon infrastructure. When our growers have crop problems or questions about what they are seeing in their fields, they turn to their local extension agents and extension scientists. Production issues, quality issues, conservation practices, weed and pest control, water quality, pesticide use, and sustainability are all common topics for our Station and Extension staff. If you don’t believe us, come to a Station field day, join local growers for a crop tour, or attend a local extension meeting and you will see why a fully funded Statewides program is so important to all of Oregon.

Four years ago, the Legislature made a long overdue investment in the Statewides. However, the benefits of that increase were eroded by the failure to maintain a Continuing Service Level of funding in the current biennium. The additional \$30 million requested in SB 257 is critical to restore the capacity lost in the current biennium and to provide funds for several critical new initiatives important to Oregon’s future.

While the State of Oregon has, and continues to, raise our production costs through increases in wage and benefit costs, higher fuel and energy costs, more regulations, higher taxes, and more administrative and reporting requirements, the work done by the Statewides is one area where increased General Fund dollars can help our operations to be more efficient, sustainable, and competitive.

We urge you to support SB 257 to provide the additional \$30 million we desperately need for the Agricultural Experiment Stations, the OSU Extension Service, and the Forest Research Laboratory.