

Chair Senator Dembrow, Vice-Chair Senator Thomsen and Members of the Senate Committee on Education.

I am writing in support of SB 404-2.

I am a second generation regenerative organic farmer and winegrower and the owner of Hope Well Vineyard in Salem. SB 404-2, will provide targeted investments to assist Oregon farmers interested in transitioning to organic practices. It will also create a new Soil Health Specialist position Oregon Department of Agriculture, providing in-house expertise at ODA to improve soil health on Oregon's agricultural lands. Healthy soils are foundational to all agriculture and will help strengthen the resilience of our rural communities. In addition to increasing productivity, water retention and pest and disease prevention, healthy soil practices can also sequester carbon in the soil and depending on the practices, can reduce farmers' energy use and reduce fertilizer- related greenhouse gas emissions. Healthy soils are also a farmer's greatest tool in building a climate resilient farm.

This new Soil Health position at ODA would support implementation of ODA's climate change plan which is aligned with the new Oregon Climate Action Plan.

In the face of a changing climate and the many benefits of soil health practices for Oregon producers, this position is a great step toward a positive future for all Oregonians.

Thank you for your consideration and your service.

Mimi Casteel
Soil Grower, Winegrower
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