

Testimony for March 15, 2021 hearing on SB 404-2.

SB 404-2 will provide targeted investments to assist Oregon farmers interested in transitioning to organic agricultural practices, and it creates a new Soil Health Specialist position in the Department of Agriculture (ODA) which creates in-house expertise at the ODA to improve soil health on Oregon's agricultural lands. Healthy soil practices are aligned with organic agricultural practices which give benefits important to farmers and ranchers. Organic practices also increase productivity and farmers' income. Our farmers and ranchers often struggle to make ends meet. They deserve to have increased profits. SB 404-2 would help them with this. Organic practices also increase soil water retention, prevent pest and disease and sequester carbon in the soil and can decrease farmers' energy use and fertilizer-related green house gas emissions. Organic practices also help farmers stay resilient in the face of changing and unpredictable climate conditions. For these reasons I urge you to support SB 404-2.