



March 14, 2021

Chair Dembrow and Members of the Senate Committee on Education:

I am writing on behalf of the Oregon Climate and Agriculture Network in strong support of SB 440-2, which will provide targeted investments to assist Oregon farmers interested in transitioning to organic practices. OrCAN is especially excited about a provision in -2 amendments to create a new Soil Health Specialist position at Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA), providing in-house expertise at ODA to improve soil health on Oregon's agricultural lands.

Healthy soils practices are aligned with organic practices and provide a variety of benefits that are important to farmers and ranchers. In addition to increasing productivity, water retention and pest and disease prevention, healthy soil practices can also sequester carbon in the soil and can reduce farmers' energy use and reduce fertilizer- related greenhouse gas emissions. They also help farmers and ranchers stay resilient in the face of changing and unpredictable climate conditions.

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;
- Advance Oregon agricultural practices that promote soil health through education, technical assistance and coordination;
- Pursue funding to support more widespread adoption of soil health practices;
- Recommend additional policies and programs in Oregon to support soil health, using other state policies as models; and
- Collaborate on research to understand Oregon's soil carbon sequestration rates and how various practices can promote carbon sequestration.

The establishment of this position at ODA is one of the most effective things our state agencies can do next biennium to sequester carbon and mitigate climate change on Oregon's agricultural lands. Please support and advance SB 404-2.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Megan Kemple", is written below the word "Sincerely,".

Megan Kemple, Co-Director, Oregon Climate and Agriculture Network