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22 March, 2021

Co-Chairs Taylor and Reardon  
Joint Committee on Ways and Means  
Subcommittee on Natural Resources  
State Capitol  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support for HB 5037 (OWEB Funding Package; Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program POP)

Dear Co-Chairs Taylor and Reardon, and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 25307. 1000 Friends of Oregon is a nonprofit, membership organization that has worked with Oregonians for more than 45 years to support livable urban and rural communities; protect family farms, forests and natural areas; and provide transportation and housing choices. We created our Food Systems Program in 2015 to expand our work with partner organizations throughout the state that are working together to build and strengthen robust and healthy food systems across Oregon. Success in achieving that goal is heavily dependent of retaining the productive capacity of the right amount of the right types of farmland, in the right places.

Oregon's land use planning program is one of the tools we rely on to protect productive farm and ranch land. However, this program is only as strong as the political will to keep it in place, and over the years since its creation nearly 60 uses have been allowed on farmland, gradually weakening the protections provided. (These uses and their impacts on farming were detailed in [a recent report](#) by 1000 Friends.) At the same time, Oregon faces an unprecedented transfer of ownership of agricultural land in the coming decades as a significant percentage of our farmers retire and pass their land on to others.

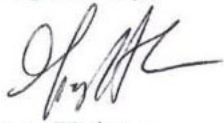
It was in recognition of these factors that the legislature created the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (OAHP) in 2017. Once fully implemented, OAHP will provide transition planning services for farmers and ranchers and leverage large amounts of federal funding to help willing families invest in permanent or long-term protection of their farms and ranches. Since the program was put in place, OWEB has created a Commission to oversee the program, adopted rules to govern grant programs to implement the program, and identified funding needs for the program. Unfortunately, the legislature as of yet has not been able to provide funding to implement the program.

Although state funding will eventually be required to realize the full potential of this program, the OWEB 2021-2023 Agency Request Budget offers a short-term workaround. Policy Option

Package (POP) Initiative 230 seeks authorization for OWEB to seek and spend funds from other public and private entities in order to begin implementation of the program. The sooner this program begins operation, the sooner Oregon can leverage significant federal funding for these programs that the state has left on the table in the past because we have not had a source for matching those funds.

We urge you to support a budget for OWEB that includes the ability to receive and distribute money to implement the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program, as described in the OWEB agency request budget, POP 230. Thank you for consideration of our comments.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Holmes', written in a cursive style.

Greg Holmes  
Food Systems Program Director  
1000 Friends of Oregon