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**Public Comment to: Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources**

**Subject: Hearing on Oregon Department of Agriculture Budget Bill (SB 5502)**

**Date: April 21, 2021**

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong support of the provisions of SB 404-3, which propose creation of two new, full-time positions at Oregon Department of Agriculture.

My name is Lynn S. Coody M.S. and I am the owner of Organic Agsystems Consulting, which is located in Eugene. I began working in the organic trade in 1974 and have devoted my long career to providing services that support the development of organic farms, organic certification programs, organic research and education programs, and regulatory infrastructure for the organic trade. In 1989, I co-authored Oregon's groundbreaking organic law, which established standards for organic production and marketing in Oregon, as well as mechanisms for enforcement of these standards through the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA). This system provided excellent oversight for Oregon's organic trade until 2002, when it was superseded by the implementation of the National Organic Program by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

### **Support for SB 404-3**

I support SB 404-3 because my work with organic and transitioning farmers makes me aware of the high value of site-specific information in providing the practical solutions needed for success. I believe that the positions it proposes at the Center for Small Farms and Community Food Systems at OSU Extension Services will provide real value to both organic farmers, as well as conventional farmers, who need support in learning about and implementing farming practices that regenerate soils, water, and other agricultural resources. Such practices not only benefit farmers, but society as a whole, by making available practical methods for producing healthy foods, economic benefits, and ecological improvements.

### **Funding Two New Positions at ODA**

Of interest at today's hearing are the provisions in Section 3 of SB 404-3 which propose two new positions at ODA.

One of these positions is a Soil Health Specialist, a position that can help both conventional and organic farmers protect and improve the condition of their soils with regard to mineral content, physical characteristics, erosion protection, and microbial biodiversity. In addition, the Soil Health Specialist can create a nexus for addressing another critically important aspect of soil health—promoting soil-based carbon sequestration practices that mitigate climate change.

Of special interest to me is the second proposed position, the "Organic Policy Special Assistant." Having worked on a wide range of organic policy projects for many years, I am familiar with the benefits of coordinating marketing and trade programs and especially, of integrating ODA's activities to better support Oregon's organic sector. Adding a position to ODA that focuses on these mandates is an effective way to take advantage of existing programs by framing them so that they are more relevant to, and supportive of, organic production practices. In my work on organic policy at the federal level, I have seen a parallel approach bear fruit at USDA through the agency's creation of a position called "Organic and Sustainable Agriculture Policy Advisor" in the office of the Secretary of Agriculture.

The scope of Oregon's organic trade extends over all sectors of food production. It includes products in each segment of the food chain, from fresh fruits and vegetables, to livestock products, to a wide range of processed foods. As a result of the broad scope of organic products and activities, many of ODA's programs impact organic operations. In creating the position of Organic Policy Special Assistant, Senate Bill 404-3 establishes a designated focal point for ensuring cohesive, integrated policies for organic operations within Oregon.

This position would not only encourage the expansion and development of the organic trade, it makes the excellent use of ODA's resources through:

1. Encouraging increased understanding of, and communication about, the needs of the organic trade throughout the agency;
2. Fostering analysis of policy gaps needed to eliminate hurdles to further development of Oregon's organic trade;
3. Eliminating duplicative regulatory efforts;
4. Streamlining programs to promote and market Oregon's organic products,
5. Creating a hub for ODA's interactions with other state agencies interested in organic issues such as those leading programs for economic development and environmental improvement; and finally,
6. Fostering opportunities for encouraging use of ecological farming practices throughout Oregon's entire agricultural community.

**Please Support Organic: Economic and Environmental Opportunities**

Thank you for considering the comments in this letter. I urge you to vote in support of the funding the positions within the Oregon Department of Agriculture as described in SB 404-3. Your vote will help increase economic opportunities in Oregon's rural areas, and will provide research and education on agricultural practices that can have lasting, positive impacts.

Respectfully Submitted,



Lynn S. Coody, M.S.  
Principal Consultant, Organic Agsystems Consulting  
Eugene, OR