



April 21, 2021

Co-Chairs Reardon and Taylor, and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on behalf of the **Oregon Farmers Markets Association, representing more than 120 farmers markets throughout the state**, to express our **support for SB 5502**, the budget bill for the **Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA)**. In particular, we strongly support **Package 430**, which provides ADMP with \$430,000 to promote Oregon agriculture in local and national markets, as well as **Package 090**, which would establish a much-needed \$1,000,000 grant program to address farming and food processing investments needs in our under-served communities.

This funding is important to Oregon's farmers markets because we rely on the support of ODA's Agriculture Marketing Department (AMD) to help promote and invest in the success of our markets and the over 6,700 vendors who sell at these markets each year. With over 1,200 of these vendors having less than 3 years of experience under their belts, this entrepreneurial pipeline is very important to the incubation of new and beginning farmers in our state.

To give an example of the support that we rely on, when COVID-19 first hit our state last March, our markets were unsure of what it meant for their market's short-term options and long-term viability. Markets were eager to find ways to keep their communities fed and their vendors in business while *also* keeping their customers safe. Staff at ODA's ADMP were able to help us secure federal funding to (a) help over  $\frac{1}{3}$  of our markets adopt online, pre-order systems to serve their most vulnerable customers and create social distance at markets, and also (b) launch a COVID-safe marketing campaign to help customers access markets that had practices in line with their own COVID safety needs. As a result of collective efforts, nearly all of our markets were able to safely open in some form last year, and 100% of the markets "survived" to open again in 2021.

We would be remiss not to also mention the excellent efforts that the Food Safety department at ODA has made in liaising with OFMA and our member markets on COVID-related safety issues. ODA staff facilitated a very productive interchange between OFMA, ODA, the Governor's Office, the Oregon Health Authority and other decision makers to both create and disseminate the ever-changing public policies needed to address COVID-19 safety in our sector. Staff regularly attended industry meetings, patiently answering market manager questions about rules and regulations.

It is not hyperbolic to say that we could not have made it through the 2020 market season with our sector as intact as it is without the support of ODA. We are grateful for the efforts they have made in recent years to support and build bridges with the small farm and local foods community, and really saw that evidenced this season. We know from our peer organizations in other states, that the support we have from ODA is above and beyond the typical level of support that farmers market communities in other states receive from their state agriculture agencies.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to provide this written testimony on this matter on behalf of Oregon's farmers market community. We urge your support of this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kelly Crane". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kelly Crane, Executive Director  
Oregon Farmers Markets Association