

Chair Witt and Members of the Committee,

My name is Seth Crawford. I am the co-owner of Oregon CBD, the nation's leading supplier of specialty industrial hemp seed and the state's oldest continually operating hemp farm. I have served on the Department of Agriculture's "Hemp Rules Advisory Committee," since its inception and also serve as chair-elect of the OSU Hemp Seed Certification committee. Our company is based in Independence and employs over 40 full time staff, ranging from horticultural professionals to Ph.D. scientists. We are internationally respected for our breakthrough advancements in hemp breeding, genomic sequencing, seed innovations, and generosity in funding collaborative research projects.

As you are aware, federal industrial hemp pilot programs were made possible by the 2014 Farm Bill and led to rapid growth in our new industry. The 2018 Farm Bill went further, establishing hemp as a fully legitimate agricultural commodity and directed both the USDA and FDA to create rules around hemp farming and products, respectively. USDA released their final farming rules in January 2021; however, the FDA is still studying how hemp products fit within their complicated regulatory framework. This has cast a shadow over hemp-derived consumer goods for the time being.

HB2284 establishes a hemp-specific commodity commission, whose purpose is to conduct research, education, and marketing efforts on behalf of Oregon producers, paid for via assessments on raw commodity sales ("up to 1.5% of the dollar value that a producer receives for the raw commodity"). I support the concept of a hemp commission. Today, I am in the paradoxical position of asking each of you to vote "no" on HB2284.

Without clear guidance from the FDA on allowable products, the establishment of a complex organizational body tasked with promoting Oregon-produced hemp products is a risky endeavor at best, and would be financed with "assessments" paid by farmers at a time when the entire industry is collectively struggling. Planted acreage peaked in 2019 and dropped substantially last year—many are not planning to farm this upcoming year due to market uncertainties.

Despite this, research and education are moving forward. In addition to the \$1m gift my brother and I contributed on behalf of our company to establish a hemp genomics initiative at OSU, we also have sponsored research contracts in place to answer pressing questions and move hemp science forward. We work with OSU faculty and students directly, every day and have promising collaborative funding proposals in the pipeline that will cement OSU's legacy as a leader in hemp research for years to come. We also work with and fund research at other universities around the country as well. The research and education components of the proposed commission are already moving forward today in positive ways.

Similar hemp commission bills have been rejected by the legislature over the past four years and I strongly encourage you to table this iteration until the federal policy landscape has solidified. Many of you on this committee are farmers and likely familiar with the complexities of commodity commissions; as you know, they are much easier to establish than they are to disband, and I would hate to see Oregon farmers paying assessments to a commission without clear federal guidance established. In closing, I'd like to reiterate that I support the concept—this just isn't the year to create one.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Seth Crawford', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Seth Crawford, Ph.D.
Co-Founder, Oregon CBD

