



Locally Grown
and
GROWING STRONG

Testimony on HB 3124

Oregon Farm Bureau Federation

House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, & Water

April 3, 2023

Chair Helm and Members of the Committee,

The Oregon Farm Bureau Federation appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of our nearly 6,600 family farm and ranch members across the state of Oregon, all of whom rely on water in one form or another for their farms and ranches to remain viable. OFB encourages the committee's support of the bipartisan Drought Relief and Water Security package of near-term and mid-to-long term actions that target root issues related to drought. OFB specifically would like to highlight the components of this package related to securing a better water future for agriculture in our state, specifically those found in the Water for Farms: Agricultural Resilience and Food Security, and Water Project Investment categories.

Water is the lifeblood for Oregon's farmers and ranchers; it is essential for Oregon's agricultural economy and many farms and ranches in Oregon cannot operate without secure access to water. Agriculture contributes an estimated \$50 billion dollars to the state's economy, making it Oregon's second largest economic driver. Given the importance of water to all of Oregon's 220+ commodities, it is critical that we ensure that we maintain access to water and invest where we can in securing a better water future for Oregon.

While we understand that HB 3124 has more work needed to be completed this session, OFB will focus our comments on Water for Farms and Water Project Investments at this time, however, OFB will remain engaged on the entirety of the drought package moving forward.

Water for Farms-Agricultural Resilience and Food Security

OFB appreciates that the bill sponsors have highlighted the need for substantial investment to help agriculture in the face of drought. Overall, OFB is highly supportive of all the actions listed within this section, except for 4-3, as we do not feel that item is specifically relevant to the issue at hand. Additionally, the policy in 4-3 has and continues to be legislated/regulated in a variety of policies and programs in the labor space, and with limited dollars being invested in drought we would like to see those dollars focused where they are needed most. OFB would encourage the sponsors to increase asks related 4-1 and 4-2, while also ensuring that definitions and eligibility under 4-1 are clear, inclusive, and appropriate for Oregon's specialty crop sector. Finally, OFB is supportive of HB 3103 and hopes to see the

Agricultural Water Technical Assistance Program funded in Ways and Means.

Water Project Investments

OFB is very supportive of the 6-1 investment in the Irrigation Modernization development fund at Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board. This funding will be the state match for a list of projects that have federal dollars and are ready for those dollars in the 2023-2025 biennium. Farmers Conservation Alliance, the non-profit organization that works with irrigation districts to implement these projects, has testimony on the record indicating that for every state dollar invested towards these projects there is \$2.3 federal dollars matched to it. That is an incredible return on investment and quickly starts projects that benefits local economies, agriculture and the environment. Additionally, OFB supports the \$6 million in investments outlined in 6-2, the basin specific projects that will develop and upgrade water and wastewater infrastructure in Klamath, Rogue River and Medford Irrigation Districts.

Oregon Farm Bureau looks forward to continuing to engage with the legislature on the important work of developing and funding a substantial drought package for Oregon and securing a better water future for our state. Thank you for your time.

Please email lauren@oregonfb.org with any questions related to these comments.