

House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

April 18, 2023

Chair Helm, Vice-Chairs Hartman and Owens and members of the Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water:

My name is Megan Kemple. I am testifying on behalf of the Oregon Coalition to Advance Soil Health, in support of HB 3124, the Bipartisan Drought Relief and Water Security Package (BiDRAWS) and specifically the inclusion of the following soil health provisions:

- Directs Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (OAHP) to provide financial assistance to farmers/ranchers for practices that support soil health (\$500,000) as well as technical assistance and equipment for SWCDs (\$480,000).
- Extends funding for ODA's existing Soil Health Specialist (\$272,234).
- Provides resources to OSU Extension for relevant specialist capacity (\$540,000), and OSU College of Agriculture for soil testing (\$225,000).

These soil health provisions in BiDRAWS leverage federal funding and existing programs to expand resources to support farmers and ranchers with soil health practices that make the most sense for their land and businesses. They provide a *voluntary, incentive-based approach* that is focused on expanding strategies to advance soil health including:

- Technical assistance from trusted farm service providers--SWCDs and OSU Extension
- Equipment sharing
- Farmer-to-farmer education--because farmers learn best from others farmers
- And financial incentives, through the existing Oregon Agriculture Heritage Program

More specifically, this section provides direction and funding for:

- Soil Health Grants and Technical Assistance Grants provided by OWEB
- Technical assistance to farmers and ranchers provided by SWCDs
- Extension specialist capacity for Oregon State University Extension
- Soil health capacity at Oregon Department of Agriculture
- Soil testing by Oregon State University College of Agricultural Sciences

This investment *would leverage federal matching funds funding in multiple ways*-- providing funding to farmers and ranchers directly; to farm service providers; and also to the state.

At a time when Oregon's farms and ranchers are increasingly impacted by drought and other extreme weather events, and high input costs and narrow profit margins, this support is critical.

Please support and advance HB 3124, the Bipartisan Drought Relief and Water Security Package (BiDRAWS), with these provisions.

Megan Kemple, Oregon Coalition to Advance Soil Health