

To the House Committee On Economic Development and Small Business

In support of OCVA and HB2909:

My name is Alanna Kieffer and I am a seaweed farmer on the North Oregon Coast.

My family moved to Seaside, OR when I was in highschool so I have grown up with the Pacific Ocean as a source of inspiration that has now become my livelihood. Throughout my many years of working in the tourism and food industries on the Oregon Coast, I have not been shown more support than when working with OCVA and the Ocean Cluster Initiative, and their efforts to Keep More Local Seafood Local.

As a farmer and manager at Oregon Seaweed in Garibaldi, I have faced many challenges. Those include not knowing how certain processes work, nor having the infrastructure in place for these processes. OCVA has helped guide and provide support and technical assistance for our company and endeavors to bring this regenerative sea vegetable to the market in our coastal communities. They have provided scholarships for HACCP (food safety) training to our staff, and helped fund educational/interpretive signage for the public, highlighting the importance of dulse seaweed to our health, as well as our environment, and showing specific uses for these relatively new products. We have benefitted by their collaborative regional distribution programs and farmers market programs, which are lowering our costs for transport and developing new market channels in our start-up years.

As a passion project for Oregon Seaweed, I am also co-founder of a larger sea vegetable community outreach project, "Winter Waters". Winter Waters is a culinary event series showcasing Portland and Coastal businesses and products, and is aimed at supporting local restaurants in the off-season while highlighting the use of sea vegetables and sustainable seafare through various culinary experiences. As a first-year event, we are running into the same issues producers seem to always hit – lack of distribution and storage infrastructure. OCVA is fully involved in this project and helping to combat these issues and connect dots in the various sectors of food service, while also providing marketing support for the series to reach a larger audience. We need the investment from HB2909 because it will allow OCVA to continue pushing and supporting these endeavors along the Oregon Coast.

With a background in marine biology and education from OSU, I knew little about the intricacies of food systems in my own backyard. Support from OCVA and the Keeping Local Seafood Local campaign has taught and inspired me to pursue this further. I have taken my marine science communication to a new level, now including teaching people about responsible foraging for their own seafare, and the systems and people behind the food on their plate. Connecting deeper with our coastal ecosystem allows others to further understand their own food system and develop a higher appreciation for it. I am currently enrolled in a matching grant program to save toward starting an outdoor education business of my own in the coming months.

Just bringing to light the numbers of how much seafood is imported and exported from Oregon makes people want to pay more attention and take more action to support their local communities by buying locally. OCVA is sharing this knowledge, as well as helping implement ways to change it, while helping Oregon move toward a more sustainable future, for food, for the environment, for our people.