

Chair Helm, Vice-Chairs Hartman and Owens and members of the Committee:

For the record my name is Ellen Hammond, Conservation Specialist, with the Jefferson County Soil and Water Conservation District, in Madras, Oregon.

Our Soil and Water Conservation District has **formally endorsed** House Bill 2998.

Agriculture drives Jefferson County's culture, economy, and land conditions. Our farmers and ranchers produce many commodities, including seed crops, dryland grains, and cattle. Roughly **half** of the carrot seed used **worldwide** comes from Jefferson County; it is a **30 million dollar** per year industry.

However, Jefferson County agriculture is suffering severely from drought.

I coordinate a drought resilience group for Jefferson County agriculture. Our diverse membership includes farmers and ranchers, agriculture-related businesses, Jefferson County Board of Commissioners, Deschutes River Conservancy, Oregon State University, Oregon Departments of Agriculture and Fish and Wildlife, and many others.

Our goal is to develop and implement a long-range plan to help our local agriculture thrive as we face long term drought.

The strategies in the Healthy Soils Bill align perfectly with what we are hoping to do.

The bill would give Soil and Water Conservation Districts like ours the capacity to promote soil health principles and practices by:

- **Conducting outreach and education**, including trainings for agricultural producers;
- **Promoting farmer-to-farmer learning**;
- Collaborating with local partners and landowners to **conduct demonstration projects, and**

- **Highlighting existing** soil health improvement efforts

Again, this is exactly what we are trying to do with our Group, and the Healthy Soils Bill would give us the capacity to do this in a way that works for farmers and ranchers in our County.

Please support HB 2998. Thank you for your time.