Chair Golden, vice-chair Girod, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to join you in support of SB 530, which you know establishes a policy of support and funding for natural climate solutions. I speak today as a first-career, first-generation vegetable farmer on a river island in the Willamette; I also serve as state forest policy coordinator for Oregon Wild.

Natural climate solutions are practices & operations on the ground that store carbon & improve the function of farms, forests, streams, parks, and wetlands. These are practices that are good for the planet but it turns out they are good for our bottom line, too.

As a farmer, I know so well that farmers can and want to store carbon on their land, because stable carbon in the soil and above the soil improves water infiltration & store, holds on to fertilizer, and keeps soil from slipping away. Storing carbon on farms is good for farms. But, it is also good for all of us, because you know that carbon is a pollutant. Locking it away as a crop booster is good for the planet and will help us reach our climate action goals.

For you today, I share three specific examples of practices that are eligible for funding and technical guidance in SB 530, the first of which is from my personal experience. For years, I've tilled for, planted, and harvested cover crops to improve our farm's fertility, with the related hours & gallons of diesel per acre. A smooth seedbed takes time. But, this last year, I finally took the opportunity to rent the Yamhill Soil and Water Conservation District's small no-till drill; it saved me 40 hours of tractor work, 20 gallons of diesel, and a lot of dust in order to plant our fields to a cover crop of red clover. And as important, I saved a lot of lost carbon from tillage and I'm building stable carbon in the soil from the cover crop. SB 530 can fund a technical assistance & no-till drill rental program for conservation districts across Oregon.

Second, as you know, we grow the best hazelnuts in the world. When nut growers prune their trees, the most expedient approach is to pile and burn prunings. There is a way to do this that doesn't send all that wood up into smoke & create air pollution: nut growers & processors like the George family are building tractor-mounted grinders. SB 530 could ease investment in these grinders, to keep these resistant carbon sources on the land.

Third, municipal composers are an amazing investment for diverting carbon-rich garden prunings and kitchen waste away from landfills, where they convert to extremely harmful methane. All that compost has to go somewhere. Another source of copious compost are dairies and other confined operations that create methane-producing bedding and manure; composting is one of the best ways to stabilize those valuable fertilizers. Commercial farms can make use of this compost stream, but they need costly equipment. The technical guidance & compost spreaders are eligible expenses under the natural climate solutions bill, and equipment-sharing builds community while putting equipment to maximum use.

Natural climate solutions store carbon on our landscape and reduce the risk of climate chaos while improving the bottom line of our farms. I hope you will support this important bill. Thank you! - Casey Kulla, farmer at Oakhill Organics and Walnut Rise, Grand Island Oregon.