



February 16, 2023

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

Re: **Support HB 2998 – Soil Health Initiative**

Chair Helm and Committee Members,

The Oregon Association of Conservation Districts (OACD) represents Oregon's 45 Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs), special districts governed by elected boards. The districts protect and enhance soil quality, water quality and quantity, and habitat by supporting voluntary conservation in partnership with private landowners and managers working with our federal, state, and nonprofit partners.

Many board members of conservation districts actively farm or have small forests and are able to share that knowledge with neighboring farmers or through district staff.

OACD strongly supports HB 2998 as it will provide a program that will enable districts to provide capacity to promote soil health principles and practices to farmers and ranchers to enable them to use scientifically based tools to build and restore soils.

The program would also give districts the capacity to measure soil health on Oregon's farms and ranches with voluntary consent of landowners and provide the data to OSU to build an inventory of soil health data.

Our role as districts is to provide the necessary technical assistance and education to farmers and ranchers to enable them to take advantage of the program. We also assist them in securing grants from state and federal agencies. We are not regulatory--our role is to provide services and support to get projects implemented on the ground.

We look forward to working with the other partners we already have strong relationships with as identified in this bill: OWEB, ODA, and OSU Extension. Our districts are generally co-located with NRCS personnel, and we can assist in getting those programs implemented on the ground as well.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jan Lee".

Jan Lee, Executive Director

Oregon Association of Conservation Districts

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