

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

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, made up of 21 organizations and over 50 farms and ranches in support of the Healthy Soils Bill, HB 2998. The bill has bi-partisan, bi-cameral support from legislators including many of you. Thank you!

HB 2998 leverages existing programs, and provides capacity to expand resources to support farmers and ranchers with soil health practices that make the most sense for their land and businesses.

Since 2020, my organization has been listening to producers large and small, organic and conventional, on the east and west sides, and with a range of crop types. And also farm service providers: such as Oregon State University (OSU) Extension and local soil and water conservation district (SWCD) staff. We conducted interviews, listening sessions, and surveys. The Healthy Soils Bill reflects what they've told us they need but aren't getting, to advance soil health on Oregon's farms and ranches. We also engaged with the agriculture community, including industry, early on and got valuable feedback which is reflected in the Bill.

The Bill is 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
- Financial incentives, through the existing Oregon Agriculture Heritage Program
- Research specific to Oregon

The Collaborating Entities are:

- OSU (both Extension and College of Ag)
- Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board
- Department of Agriculture
- Soil and Water Conservation Districts

I have also submitted to the record a factsheet on the bill, a list of over 50 endorsing farms and ranches, and a factsheet from the Natural Resources Conservation Service on the many benefits of soil health for farmers and ranchers. You'll hear more about these benefits from farmers and ranchers during the Hearing today.

Please support and advance HB 2998.

Megan Kemple
Oregon Coalition to Advance Soil Health