



February 17, 2023

To: House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
Re: Support for HB 2998 – Healthy Soils Bill

Greetings Chair Helm and members of the committee.

I serve as the PNW Policy Manager for the American Farmland Trust. AFT's mission is to save the land that sustains us by protecting farmland, promoting sound farming practices, and keeping farmers on the land. We are excited about HB 2998, which would establish the Oregon Soil Health Initiative, leveraging existing programs and creating new pathways to support producers in enhancing the health of Oregon's soils.

This bill is modeled after an approach taken in Washington. The [Washington Soil Health Initiative](#) (WaSHI) was created in 2020 as a partnership between Washington State University, the State Dept of Agriculture, and the State Conservation Commission. Through research, outreach, and funding, the partners provide science-based technical assistance for increasing soil health across the state's diverse regions and cropping systems.

WaSHI has sampled over 700 sites to understand the baseline of soil health and will monitor changes over time. They developed a roadmap through a participatory process informed by a wide range of producers eager to shape the future of soil health.

I share this work to highlight potential outcomes of HB 2998, but want to acknowledge that Oregon is different. This week a panel of Washington farmers, each who bring decades of soil health expertise, talked about their successes, challenges, and tough business decisions on their farms. They said the most important principle for soil health is "context." Conditions vary between the two states, but also across the regions of Oregon and even from farm to farm.

HB 2998 establishes a framework for Oregon producers to provide that context. With farmer-to-farmer learning, farmers and ranchers will be able to shape and lead the work to advance soil health. This bill will support, coordinate, and celebrate the work that many producers are already doing while building a base of shared knowledge and enthusiasm for Oregon's soils.

Sincerely,

Dani Madrone
Pacific Northwest Policy Manager, American Farmland Trust
dmadrone@farmland.org
(360) 939-1881