



March 16, 2023

Chair Ken Helm
House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources and Water
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Helm and members of the committee,

On behalf of the Oregon Wine Council, which represents over fifty percent of Oregon Wine grapes, grown, produced and sold, I am writing to ask you to support HB 3244, which establishes a task force to support the economic competitiveness of agriculture in Oregon.

As you know, Oregon's agriculture producers have faced significant – and often historic – challenges in the last few years. In 2020, Oregon's wine industry's economic impact decreased by \$1.5 billion and grape production decreased by 29%. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, agriculture producers experienced a historic wildfire season in September 2020. Those wildfires had a significant impact on wine grape growers throughout the state, as many growers were unable to produce wine from that year's harvest. Wildfires have also led to challenges for many growers when it comes to securing insurance coverage.

On top of the pandemic and wildfires, many growers, particularly those in Southern Oregon, also experienced significant drought over the last few years, which has impacted crop yields and the ability of many producers to sustain their operations.

Finally, labor shortages and a high regulatory environment have increased costs for agriculture producers in Oregon, putting them on an uneven playing field with competitors in other states. Our wine industry, in particular, has felt the challenges of labor shortages, as wine grapes are an extremely labor-intensive crop and most picking has to be done by hand and in a short period of time.

This task force would ensure that the challenges of Oregon's agriculture producers are being heard and recognized and steps are being taken to ensure their economic viability into the future. As you know, Oregon wine plays a significant role in both the agriculture and tourism economies of our state, and we would encourage you to support any program that would help ensure its long-term viability. Thank you for supporting HB 3244.

Sincerely,

Fawn Barrie
Executive Director
Oregon Wine Council