

**Testimony to the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural
Resources and Water
On HB 3366**

March 16, 2023

**Karen Lewotsky, Water Program Director & Rural Partnerships Lead
Oregon Environmental Council**

Founded in 1968, the Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership-based organization. We advance innovative, collaborative and equitable solutions to Oregon's environmental challenges for today and future generations.

OEC strongly supports HB 3366. This bill will fund the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (OAHP), securing \$10 Million for grants and \$800,000 for program administration focused on working lands.

OAHP was created by the legislature in 2017, with the goals of protecting Oregon's agricultural lands from development through conservation easements and supporting succession planning that keeps family-scale working agricultural operations healthy and productive members of our agricultural sector. OAHP accomplishes those goals by assisting farms and ranches with transition/succession planning services and leveraging federal dollars for setting up conservation easements with willing land owners.

While the legislature has provided funding for OAHP over the years, the program has never been fully funded. The \$800,000 included in HB 3366 for program administration would, for the first time since the program was created, allow the program to be fully staffed.

Every year we fail to fully fund OAHP, Oregon leaves precious federal funding on the table. OAHP must have sufficient funding to provide the state match required to access those federal funds. The \$10 Million included in HB 3366 for grants will fund match requirements for federal programs, protecting Oregon's productive farmlands and helping to ensure that agriculture remains a pillar of Oregon's economy.

OEC urges you to pass HB 3366. If we want to keep our state's working lands in production, support rural businesses and ensure that Oregon accesses as much of the available federal funding as possible for this work, we must fully fund OAHP.