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29 March, 2023

Chair Helm, Vice Chairs Hartman and Owens,
and Members of the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use,
Natural Resources, and Water
State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support for HB 3124, The BiDRAWS Resilience Package

Dear Chair Helm, Vice-Chairs Hartman and Owens, and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 3124, the Bipartisan Drought Relief and Water Security (BiDRAWS) Package. 1000 Friends of Oregon is a nonprofit, membership organization that has worked with Oregonians for nearly 50 years to support livable urban and rural communities; protect family farms, forests and natural areas; and provide transportation and housing choices.

We created our Food Systems Program in 2015 to expand our work with partner organizations throughout the state that are working together to build and strengthen robust and healthy food systems across Oregon. Success in achieving that goal is heavily dependent of retaining the productive capacity of the right amount of the right types of farmland, in the right places. Water is one of the critical elements in maintaining that productive capacity.

The 35-page proposed BiDRAWS Package that is before you includes many important components. We would like to express support for a final package that includes the following specific elements:

- Funding the mini-grants for resilience/adaptation and relief for small scale farms and ranches in Component 4-7. This component builds on a successful program from the 2022 legislature, and targets smaller farms and ranches that would otherwise not qualify for or be able to take advantage of programs that can help them build resilience and recover from disaster.
- Funding programs to help build more resilient food systems under Component 4-8. Among other things, this funding would help strengthen local and regional distribution and sales outlets and make them accessible to more Oregonians.
- Fully funding the soils health provisions in Component 4-10. These voluntary, incentive-based soils health programs leverage existing programs and provide capacity to expand

resources to support farmers and ranchers with practices that make the most sense for their land and businesses.

- Irrigation infrastructure across the state needs significant repair and modernization. We are not in a position to evaluate the relative merits of the project investments that are proposed in Components 6-1 through 6-8. However, we urge the Legislature to create a comprehensive plan for addressing this need and to begin funding appropriate projects.
- Finally, it is past time for Oregon to have a comprehensive, coordinated approach to managing water issues across the state. We support the components under the headings of “Planning, Coordination, and Capacity” and “Data and Analysis” that would help achieve that outcome.

We urge you to support HB 3124, the Bipartisan Drought Relief and Water Security Package, with these provisions. Thank you for consideration of our comments.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Holmes', written in a cursive style.

Greg Holmes
Food Systems Program Director
1000 Friends of Oregon