

Submitter: Halle Riddlebarger

On Behalf
Of: Medford Food Co-op

Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and
Water

Measure: HB3124

Chair Helm, Vice-chairs Hartman and Owens, and members of the committee:

My name is Halle Riddlebarger and I'm writing on behalf of Medford Food Co-op. Medford Food Co-op is a local community-owned grocery store located in Medford, Oregon. The Co-op is cooperatively-owned by more than 4,800 community members. We feature organic produce from local farmers and a variety of local and regional products, from fresh produce to bulk goods to beer and wine. We exist to sustain a vibrant, healthy community and a thriving local, organic food economy.

We are writing today in support of HB 3124 and especially on the importance of components 4-7 and 4-8. Components 4-7 and 4-8 provide support to small farmers and the community food system in the face of the ongoing drought and related natural disasters. It is so important that the state prioritizes these community assets when thinking about drought resilience and planning for Oregon's changing water reality. Component 4-7 creates a separate fund for small farmers to gain drought resilience through the Oregon Community Food Systems Network. The OCFSN has proven its ability to run this kind of program and its members are trusted resources for new, small, and diverse farmers that do not traditionally take advantage of ODA programs. Component 4-8 creates resilience for our community food system sales outlets which will allow them to keep benefiting farmers and feeding communities even in the face of drought related disasters.

Medford Food Co-op owners and shoppers prioritize community food systems and believe farmers markets are essential businesses providing safe and reliable access to nutritionally dense food for our communities. In addition to stimulating local economies, farmers markets and food hubs incubate and grow small farm businesses and help them reach new customers. Small farms and local community food systems are good for rural economies: generating jobs, income, and cycling more dollars through the local economy than commodity farms.

Medford Food Co-op supports HB3124 because drought resilience and planning is vital for our region, and small farmers need support and access to resources as we continue to weather drought, recover from the devastating wildfires in 2020, and prepare for an unknown future.

It is a good investment to prioritize community food systems and make Oregon more resilient. Please support HB 3124 and prioritize components 4-7 and 4-8.

Sincerely,
Halle Riddlebarger
Outreach Manager
Medford Food Co-op