



## East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District

April 9, 2023

To: House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

From: East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District (EMSWCD) Board of Directors

### **RE: Support for HB 3366 - Full Funding for the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program**

Chair Helm and Committee Members,

We submit the following to voice our strong support of HB 3366, SB 5539 and OWEB POP's 215 and 115 being heard by the Way & Means Committee. This bipartisan effort seeks to fully fund the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (OAHP) for the 2023-2025 biennium. EMSWCD is dedicated to protecting farmland, keeping it in production, and enhancing all of our natural resources. OAHP is a critical resource to ensure this across Oregon.

Our mission is to help people care for land and water, from the east banks of the Willamette River to the eastern boundary of Multnomah County. Land outside the Urban Growth Boundary in Multnomah County is always at risk of being converted, even with UGB guidelines, given its proximity to Portland. With legacy farmers in our district retiring in record numbers, the focus on protection of working farmlands becomes even greater.

OAHP is a key partner in these efforts across the state through the programs they fund - working lands conservation easements and covenants, conservation management plans and activities, succession planning education, and technical assistance for support organizations.

In their 2023-2025 Agency Requested Budget, the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) requested \$10 million in grants (POP 215) and \$800,000 for administration (POP 115) of the OAHP. Unfortunately, that funding was not included in the Governor's Recommended Budget for OWEB. HB 3366 will fill this gap by providing the funding requested by OWEB for the OAHP for the next 2 years.

The timing of this funding is critical. The federal government just invested an additional \$20 billion in agricultural conservation programs through the passage of the Inflation Reduction Act. OAHP helps Oregon leverage federal funds that we have left on the table for years. From 1996-



2019, Oregon received only \$7.2 million in federal dollars from the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) at the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

In contrast, the state of Rhode Island received \$43 million during that time period because they put \$36.6 million in state funding on the table. Last session's commitment of \$5 million to the OAHP almost immediately leveraged a 1,100% increase in federal funding through ACEP - an increase to \$6.7 million in 2022. The funding of the OAHP brings Oregon in line with the 26 other states with matching working lands easement grant programs.

HB 3366 will help Oregon leverage federal dollars to conserve agricultural lands while keeping farm and ranch land in production, reduce carbon emissions, and support rural businesses and communities.

We urge the members of this committee to support HB 3366 and thank you for reviewing this written testimony as you deliberate.

Sincerely,

Jasmine Zimmer Stucky, Chair  
On behalf of the EMSWCD Board of Directors