

April 14, 2023

Full Ways and Means Committee Members

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RE: Support SB 458 - OSU Statewide Public Service Programs Funding

As President of the Lincoln County Master Gardener Association Board (LCMGA), a non-profit organization, I strongly support the request for **OSU Statewide Public Service Programs funding (SB 458) for \$206 M – including the \$15.7 M for Continuing Service Level and \$34.3 M for bolstering capacity and building resilience** in communities, food systems, and natural resources. Lincoln County Master Gardener Association members are active OSU Extension volunteers. We see, firsthand, how Extension programs engage people and families to better their lives. Each year, Extension Master Gardeners teach thousands of local gardeners how to **grow their own food** and about **gardening practices that build soil, conserve water, and help wildlife**.

OSU Extension Service is one of three statewide public service programs. It **engages people, families, and businesses** to help solve problems, manage resources, and develop leadership in rural and urban areas. Investing in OSU Extension Service, we believe, provides **immediate benefit for both rural and urban Oregonians**.

Our Master Gardener membership is comprised of over 88 active and associate members with another 15 Apprentices going through our program this year. As such we work closely with our Program Coordinator, Evie Smith and an Educational Program Assistant. Lincoln County is very fortunate to have had these positions filled in most years and it makes a tremendous impact on our ability to train Master Gardeners, enhance our diagnostic responses to citizens who reach out to us through the Plant Clinic, and generally provide support and expertise for sustainable gardening to protect our natural resources. We are keenly aware of the negative impact unfilled positions have had on Master Gardener programs in other counties.

Across Oregon in 2022, **2,800 Master Gardener volunteers** gave more than **108,000 hours** to serve our communities. These Master Gardener activities are a very visible element of OSU Extension activities in urban and suburban settings. We are able to deliver this quality gardening education only with support and guidance from OSU Extension. **Investment in OSU Extension leverages many hours in volunteer services and community benefit.**

Please support Oregon State University Extension by fully funding **SB 458 OSU Statewide Public Service Programs** as requested: a total of \$206 M which includes the \$50 million package to restore Continuing Service Level and initiatives to build resiliency. At this level, Extension will continue current services and expand into new, critical areas to build resilient communities, food systems, and natural resources.

Thank you for your support.



Ann Geyer, President
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