

Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court St. NE
Salem Oregon 97301

April 21, 2023

Co-Chairs Steiner and Sanchez, Co-Vice Chairs Girod, Gomberg, and G. Smith, and members of the Committee:

I am testifying on behalf of the Oregon Coalition to Advance Soil Health, made up of 27 organizations and over 80 farms and ranches from across the state, to urge you to fund the Healthy Soils Bill, HB 2998. The bill has bi-partisan, bi-cameral support from legislators including many of you.

The Healthy Soils Bill leverages federal funding and existing programs to expand resources to support farmers and ranchers with soil health practices that make the most sense for their land and businesses.

The Bill is a *voluntary, incentive-based approach* that is focused on expanding strategies to advance soil health including:

- Technical assistance from trusted farm service providers--SWCDs and OSU Extension
- Farmer-to-farmer education--because farmers learn best from others farmers
- And financial incentives, through the existing Oregon Agriculture Heritage Program
- Equipment sharing and soil testing

It does all of this with a small investment. More importantly, the Soil Health Initiative *would leverage federal matching funding in multiple ways*-- providing funding to farmers and ranchers and ranchers directly; to farm service providers; and also to the state.

Oregon's farms and ranches are increasingly impacted by extreme weather events, while struggling with increased input costs and narrow profit margins.

Healthy soils can provide many benefits for farms and ranches, including:

- resilience to drought and other extreme weather events;
- economic resilience;
- improved water and nutrient-holding capacity, reduced erosion, enhanced plant health;
- environmental benefits including improved water quality, and increased biodiversity and habitat and sequestered carbon.

Please fund the Healthy Soils Bill, HB 2998A.

Megan Kemple, Lead Advocate, Oregon Coalition to Advance Soil Health