

THE
CONSERVATION FUND

Phone: 406-541-8555
Email: gwatson@conservationfund.org
www.conservationfund.org

RE: HB 4060 in House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

Dear Chair Helm and Members of the Committee,

I am writing on behalf of The Conservation Fund in strong support of HB 4060, which would provide \$10.8 million in state funding for the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program. The Conservation Fund is a national nonprofit that works closely with local partners to support conservation at scale. We have worked since 1985 to protect the land that sustains us all. We are in the business of conservation, creating innovative solutions that drive nature-based action in all 50 states for climate protection, vibrant communities and sustainable economies.

OAHP protects farm and ranch land from development through working land easements, keeping acres in production and enhancing natural resource values. Without state funding in 2024, \$7.2 million already allocated to Oregon through the Natural Resources Conservation Service for this work risks being returned to the federal government.

The Conservation Fund has worked with local partners to conserve more than 96,000 acres of land. We are currently working with the Wild Rivers Land Trust to protect 775 acres of the Wahl Ranch near Port Orford, Oregon with an agricultural conservation easement. This 1890's sheep ranch continues to operate today with an emphasis on soil health, wildlife habitat and climate resiliency. The project has received \$5M in NRCS funding and was awarded critical state match through OAHP in 2023. Without a parallel state program like OAHP, projects like this that protect the working lands of Oregon are extremely difficult to complete.

With \$10.8 million in state funding for OAHP, Oregon can leverage already awarded federal dollars to invest in our vital farm and ranchlands. These investments will protect tens of thousands of agricultural acres across our diverse geography.

Please support passage of HB 4060 in the 2024 legislative session. Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Gates Watson
Vice President, Northwest Director
Conservation Acquisition

CC: Senate President Rob Wagner
House Speaker Dan Rayfield