

Dear Chair Helm, Vice Chairs Owens and Hartman, and members of the committee:

My name is Erin Maidlow and I am a community member and farm advocate from Roseburg, in Douglas County. I am writing today in support of the Oregon Agricultural Heritage program and HB 4060. OAHP is the beginning of an investment that the state needs to make if it is truly going to support Oregon's community food systems and agricultural future. The conservation management plan and conservation easement portions of the program are great examples of supporting the farmer driven desire to protect the ecosystems of our working lands in harmony with food production. We should make these tools available to as many farmers as possible.

I am personally invested in this topic because as a community member and supporter of small farms, I see a dire need for conservation of natural resources and preservation of farmland. In Douglas County, we have many young farmers who struggle to access farmland due to rising and inaccessible land prices, which only gives way to developers who have no interest in agriculture. Conservation easements would preserve farmland and potentially make accessing it for young and beginning farmers much easier in order to continue regenerative practices that will provide a thriving food system for many generations to come.

There are not enough tools available to keep Oregon's farmland in production and help farmers afford to buy the land they steward. Conservation easements are one of the only widely used tools we are aware of that can permanently lower the cost of accessing farmland. Conservation management plans allow farmers and land stewards to enact the needed restoration and maintenance projects to keep the farm ecosystem functioning and keep our agricultural land viable for generations to come. We are so lucky to have a vibrant community food system here in Oregon and we need to invest in it to keep it viable. This is not the only path forward and we need to continue to find creative, equitable and truly sustainable solutions to our land access crisis, but this is a place to start. Thank you to the committee members and

chair who have prioritized this bill and the Oregon Ag Heritage Program. I urge you to support this vital program for the sake of Oregon's communities, land and agricultural future.

Sincerely,

Erin Maidlow

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