



Friends of Family Farmers ♦ PO Box 751 ♦ Junction City, OR 97448

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

Thank you for the opportunity to show support of HB 4060. My name is Alice Morrison and I am here representing Friends of Family Farmers. FoFF is a nonprofit organization based in Junction City which represents 1,600 small and midsize, highly diversified and local market farmers across Oregon. We rely on our farmers to tell us what is most important to them and during our surveys and focus groups, land access and mitigating the impact of climate change are always at the top of the list. We see the Oregon Ag Heritage Program as a tool to address both of these issues.

OAHP's conservation management plan section allows our farmers the opportunity to work with experts at OWEB and other agencies to identify ways they can build the long term health and resilience of their farm ecosystem. These projects not only help make riparian areas less susceptible to erosion, increase soil health, and increase biodiversity on farms, they ultimately make these working lands more resilient to changing and often extreme weather patterns. This is a crucial part of keeping Oregon's ag land productive and vital. Not to mention OAHP makes federal conservation dollars more accessible by helping farmers to pay the match required.

OAHP's conservation easement program is also a conservation tool, preserving farmland from development and making it immune to zoning changes from UGB expansion, but above that it is one of the only ways we are aware of to lower the value of farmland without asking the current owner to forgo the price (which is often their only way to pay for retirement). Conservation easements are essentially the purchase of certain use rights from a piece of land. The current owner is paid for the value of these use rights by the easement holder (sometimes a land trust or conservation district) and then the land can be purchased by the next owner at the lower, agricultural use only price. It is also an opportunity to protect that land from misuse because based on the will of the owner, an easement can include conservation stewardship requirements and preclude speculative investors from being eligible to buy the land. This program is also eligible for federal matching funds through the ACEP-ALES program at USDA to stretch this state investment further.

Land access is a complicated issue and there are many parts that need to be addressed. In order to make land more affordable we need to increase the buying power of the next generation of farmers in addition to helping family farms stay in production and the elder generation protect their land after retirement. FoFF is looking forward to continuing Oregon's commitment to our agricultural culture in this state and finding solutions for folks at every stage of the process, including addressing the systemic barriers Oregon's history has posed to farmers of color securing land to grow. We need more farmers in Oregon period and OAHP is a vital tool to add to our state's repertoire to keep agricultural land in production. I urge your enthusiastic support of this program, thank you for making this a priority of the committee.

Sincerely,
Alice Morrison
Co-Executive Director
Friends of Family Farmers