

DATE: January 20, 2025

To: House Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water Committee

From: 2T Sustainable Land and Cattle Holdings LLC

**RE: Supporting HB 3131 and \$17.3 Million in funding for the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (OAHP) in 2025-2027 Budget**

Co-Chairs Helm and Owens, Vice-Chair Finger McDonald, and Members of the Committee:

We write to you today to share our strong support for HB 3131 and its **\$17.3 million** in funding the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (OAHP) in the 2025 Oregon Legislative Session. OAHP helps Oregon leverage a remarkable **2:1 federal match** through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and protects working ranch and farmlands for their agriculture and natural resource values.

2T Sustainable Land and Cattle Holdings is working to stitch ranchland back together here in Deschutes County. When I was a kid it was all one ranch and now it is two. We have bought them both back and are wanting to place a conservation easement on these ranches so they will be protected from development in the future.

The first half of our property has already been allocated funds from NRCS and OAHP. The second property has been allocated funds from NRCS and was recommended for OAHP funding in 2024, but there were not enough OAHP funds to fund all the recommended projects. So our federal funds are vulnerable. Oregon is pretty tardy to the ag lands protection party. We should at least be able to match our federal dollars to make these projects possible. It's honestly embarrassing that we keep begging year after year. I've been to Salem twice and I would like to see a bigger investment by my state.

We are working with the Deschutes Land Trust to hold these lands in perpetuity. We have set up a rigorous land management contract that includes organic farming and wildlife friendly fencing, among other conservation best practices. We want to do more than keep the lands open. We want them managed particularly well forever. No more chemicals.

Buying ranches in this land value climate is very expensive and it would be a huge help to offset the burden of the mortgage by placing conservation easements on them. Ranching is thankless and undervalued, yet essential to our food security, wildlife, carbon sequestration, etc. Show some support to the ranchers dedicating their lives as stewards of Oregon's land.

Thank you,

Sarahlee Lawrence, Owner of 2T Sustainable Land and Cattle Holdings

*Sarahlee Lawrence*