

Submitter: Robert Crouse

On Behalf Of:

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

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3131

1/22/2025

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

From: ORGANIZATION/NAME

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:

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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.

I own a farm in Josephine County Oregon. I strongly support this bill as we need more young people doing our farming. This does affect me as I am a part of the generation that currently owns most of the farmland and need to get my equity out so I can retire. I currently am in the process of selling my farm to a young family that is currently renting part of the farm. They do not have the means to buy all of the farm, but I need to sell all of it to pay off debt and have some cash left over to fund my retirement. I am not interested in holding a second mortgage as the risk is too high and I don't have the years left to recoup if they default on the loan. This bill could be a help to the passing of land to the next generation of farmers:

Allows farmers to realize some of the equity in their land without selling part of the farm or selling to developers.

- Works with farmers on a voluntary basis to maintain and improve farm production while preserving ag land and conserving natural habitat.
- Technical assistance helps farmers adapt to climate change and adopt climate-friendly practices,
- Programs help farmers find the next generation to take over the land and keep it in production.
- Has broad support across the industry and bipartisan support in the legislature - a no brainer!

- The Climate Action Commission has repeatedly recommended funding for OAHP as an important part of Natural and Working Land climate mitigation.

Thank you,

Robert J. Crouse

President Fort Vannoy Farms, Inc.

President Josephine County Farm Bureau

Landowner/farmer