



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

503-581-7124 ♦ www.FriendsofFamilyFarmers.org

Co-Chairs Helm and Owens, Vice Chair Finger McDonald, and members of the committee:

Friends of Family Farmers is a statewide nonprofit organization that serves 1,600 farmers and supports programs and policies that help small and midsize, highly diversified, local market farmers thrive. We are writing in support of HB 2168 and continue the programs our state provides for ODA's Water Well Abandonment, Repair and Replacement Fund, DEQ's low interest septic replacement loan program and OSU's outreach and education on well and septic maintenance. These services are vital to rural communities around the state not only for their basic water and waste services in rural homes, but also to protect the groundwater quality for their rural neighbors and surface water sources surrounding failing systems.

We serve a primarily rural group of agricultural producers, many of whom would be overburdened by the sudden failure of this type of infrastructure, and many more of whom are reliant on the safety and cleanliness of the water resources their wells tap into for both personal use and irrigation. It is in the best interest of agricultural producers in Oregon broadly and rural communities everywhere in the state that everyone has access to the education and outreach to help them take care of their septic systems and wells. This can help avoid problems from failed systems and help home owners make their systems last longer, reducing their cost burden overtime. OSU Extension is the right organization to provide this education and already has many offices and community partnerships to lean on to distribute this information. Please give them the resources they need to do the preventative, community education work needed on this topic.

Our rural communities also need investment from the state to keep up with the demands of infrastructure replacement. For example, we heard in the hearing that a well maintained septic system in normal conditions can last around 40 years, and while that is a long time, eventually all of these systems will need to be replaced. Please maintain the programs at ODA and DEQ that make it easier to replace this crucial infrastructure. Working wells and septic systems keep rural residents in their homes, preserve water quality by adequately treating waste, and are a cornerstone of thriving rural communities. Please prioritize these important programs through HB 2168.

Sincerely,

Alice Morrison
Co-Executive Director
Friends of Family Farmers