



January 24, 2025

Co-Chairs Helm and Owens and Members
House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
State Capitol
900 Court St NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: HB 3131, Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program

1000 Friends of Oregon supports HB 3131, which will provide \$17.3 million to the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) for the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (OAHP). This program helps farmers and ranchers establish, maintain, and enhance conservation easements on working lands.

1000 Friends of Oregon is a statewide nonprofit organization. We have worked with Oregonians for 50 years to support livable urban and rural communities; protect family farms, forests and natural areas; and provide transportation and housing choices. We created our Food Systems Program in 2015 to expand our work with partner organizations that are working together to build and strengthen robust and healthy food systems across Oregon.

Success in achieving that goal is heavily dependent on retaining the productive capacity of Oregon's farm land. Agriculture is Oregon's #2 industry, producing over \$6.6 billion in annual sales, and has been stable and growing throughout the cyclical up and downs of Oregon's other top industries.

Oregon agriculture faces an unprecedented transfer of ownership of agricultural land in the coming decades, as a significant percentage of our farmers retire and pass their land on to others. In recognition of these factors, the legislature created the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (OAHP) in 2017, under OWEB. The program provides transition planning services for farmers and ranchers and leverages large amounts of federal funding to help willing families invest in permanent or long-term protection of their farms and ranches.

Initial funding for the OAHP program has helped farms across diverse geographies and operations, from a century-old cattle ranch in Lake County to historically underserved, first-generation farmers in Deschutes County. The additional funding will enable more farms and ranches to keep producing food through the next generations.

We urge you to support HB 3131. Thank you for considering our comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "J".

Working Lands Policy Director