

House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

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

Please accept this testimony in support of HB 2979, which provides funding for Oregon's Farmer and Rancher Disaster Resilience Grants. Please also find a letter of support for HB 2979 signed by 248 farms, ranches, food hubs, farmers markets, community organizations and community members, submitted by Alice Morrison. In addition to the public hearing today, February 5th, the Committee got an Implementation Update during Legislative Days in September.

The Farmer and Rancher Disaster Resilience Grant Program builds on the 2022 Farmer and Rancher Disaster Relief Program. Although the disaster relief funding was critical and valued, we heard from farmers that what they needed going forward was funding to be more resilient to climate related extreme weather events to protect their crops and animals, rather than being compensated by the state after they lost them. In response, and with support from the 2023 legislature, the Farmer & Rancher Disaster Resilience Grant Program was established.

This essential and nationally unique funding is supporting Oregon's small and underserved producers to be more resilient to climate-related disasters funding projects such as shade cloth, trailers for evacuation, and irrigation efficiency. This funding is a great alternative to traditional disaster relief funding-- as it has given farmers the resources to *maintain* their crops and livestock through extreme weather events, rather than being compensated by the State *after they lose them*. It's a strategic and responsible use of state funding. For example, rather than compensating a producer for their failed blueberry crop, the state could make a small investment in shade cloth. Or rather than losing their animals to fire, a farmer could get a trailer to evacuate. These investments can last for years and also leverage federal funds such as NRCS's Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) and Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

In 2024, Round One of this Grant Program awarded \$1.6 million to 114 small farms and ranches across Oregon. An Impact Report has been submitted to the record by Andrew Collins-Anderson with the Oregon Community Food Systems Network. I've submitted a letter with testimonials from 27 grantees about the impact of the grants. Round 2 closed last week and we have 206 applications requesting \$3 million in funding of the \$900,000 that is available for grants this round. Thanks to all of you, including Representative Owens, who helped to get the word out in your communities.

Overall \$7 million was requested with \$2.5M available. As you can see, the need far exceeds available funding.

This funding is critical to the resilience of Oregon's small farms and ranches. Please support and advance HB 2979. Thank you for your consideration and your service.

Megan Kemple, Executive Director
Oregon Climate and Agriculture Network