



Testimony in Support of HB 2979 to the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources and Water

Kendra Kimbirauskas & Ivan Maluski

Shimanek Bridge Farm, Scio

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Chair Helm, Co-Chair Owens and Members of the Committee,

We are writing today to thank you for introducing HB 2979 and to urge the committee to give it unanimous support. We farm and ranch on nearly 70 acres in the Scio area, raising grass fed beef and goat, pasture raised pork, and vegetables. In a typical year we finish and direct-market 10-20 beef, 25-50 goats and 10-20 pigs. We primarily sell our products through the Salem Saturday Farmers Market, with some sales to restaurants and food carts, and through a farm stand.

HB 2979 provides a critical lifeline for Oregon's local food systems and small and mid-sized family farms and ranches across the state. The bill builds on past successful efforts from the Legislature that made crucial investments in helping farms and ranches become more resilient in the face of extreme weather, natural disasters, rising temperatures and water scarcity. This bill also supports the farmers markets and food hubs many of these farms and ranches depend on for sales, distribution and storage. Farmers markets and food hubs connect rural and urban Oregon, providing economic opportunities for producers who sell directly to consumers. They ensure access to healthy local food even during times of national food system disruption, and are a key access point for low-income Oregonians on supplemental nutrition assistance programs to buy Oregon grown fresh fruits and vegetables and healthy, nutrient dense local meat products they might not otherwise have access to.

Like many farms in the region, we experienced economic losses during the 2021 heat dome and related drought. We lost valuable forage for our livestock at a critical time of year as the heat did significant damage to our pastures. Despite purchasing emergency supplemental feed, livestock performance suffered, and the situation required expensive pasture reestablishment in areas where extreme heat effectively terminated well-established perennial grasses and clovers even in fields we had been irrigating.

To plan for future events such as the 2021 heat dome/drought, at our own expense we have since planted hundreds of trees and shrubs to create additional shade, spent thousands of dollars on seed, and increased our focus on no-till management, including investing in a no-till pasture seeder to build soil health and soil organic matter and to be less reliant on irrigation water as a bulwark against future drought and heat dome events.

In 2024, we received a small grant from the Farmer and Rancher Disaster Resilience Grant Program to build on this work. This allowed us to plant an additional 300 trees and shrubs to

provide more shading, purchase a roller crimper implement and additional Oregon grown grass and clover seed for no-till management to help build soil-organic matter and prevent soil moisture loss in our pastures, and invest in shade cloth for our greenhouse and water-efficient drip irrigation on our ¼ acre market vegetable plot. Many other farms and ranches also received grants like this through the Farmer and Rancher Disaster Resilience Grant Program. It's a worthwhile program that helps farmers and ranchers make investments in water efficiency, soil health, and disaster preparedness they might not otherwise be able to afford before the next time extreme weather, wildfire or other dangerous conditions return.

Again, we urge your support for HB 2979. Thank you for your consideration.

Kendra Kimbirauskas & Ivan Maluski
Shimanek Bridge Farm
39006 Richardson Gap Rd.
Scio, Oregon