



Dear Co-Chair Helm, Co-Chair Owens and members of the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Wildfire:

My name is Shelley Schuler and I am a farmer and food hub operator in Eugene, Oregon. Lane County Bounty is a food hub I founded in 2020 as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our mission remains to support family farms and other local food business and to keep them in business. This year, Lane County Bounty is expanding local food distribution routes in the communities of Oakridge, Florence, and Cottage Grove. We also partner with statewide organizations to increase local food in schools & institutions and provide access to fresh Oregon grown fruits, vegetables, meats and pantry projects for SNAP recipients and food bank clients across the county. We are acutely aware of the barriers for rural Oregonians to access local food and are committed to serving all communities.

I am writing today to support HB 2979 and tell you how crucial it is that we continue our investment in the local food system by increasing sales for our small farms and ranches to allow them to expand production and that they can withstand the natural disasters, worsening storms, and unpredictable weather that has been increasing in recent years. When weather is bad, or smoke fills the air, customers can still access local food through our marketplace.

Over my 15 years working in the Lane County food system, I have seen many agricultural businesses shutter due to market changes, higher prices, and increasing costs of production. Access to infrastructure and distribution networks are crucial to the viability and expansion of these vital businesses. Lane County Bounty has received indirect support from the Oregon legislature that has magnified our impact on our community. We are able to move more food, connect with more consumers, and elevate more farm businesses because of state support.

We must continue to support farms and build efficient food systems. Farmers are relying on Lane County Bounty's unique ability as a food hub to adapt to changing markets, access shared infrastructure, and meet consumer demands for convenience and choice.

It is time for Oregon to renew its commitment to our small farms and local food system. They keep our communities fed and insulated from the fluctuations of the centralized food supply chain. They are a vital part of our collective wellbeing, environmental stewardship, and the future of food. Please support HB 2979.

Thank you,

Shelley Schuler

Lane County Bounty

Eugene, Oregon