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

My name is Carrie Juchau and I am a small farm owner of Daily Blessings Farm located in Grants Pass, Oregon growing organic strawberries and layer poultry for eggs. I am writing today to support HB 2979 and express how crucial it is that we continue our investment in the local food system by supporting small farms and the outlets that they depend on; especially farmers markets and food hubs. These community organizations provide essential services and outreach for local agricultural producers in rural Oregon.

This bill personally impacts my farms' need to proactively prepare with systems in place to support resiliency through severe weather and wildfires. Being an isolated, rural farmer, I depend on a local food hub called the Josephine County Farm Collective to store my produce and eggs in a walk-in cooler shared with other surrounding producers who cannot afford to purchase and build their own cold storage. Additionally, my electricity is routinely interrupted by the power company during wildfire season and weather during the winter. The closer a wildfire approaches, the longer Pacific Power turns off our electricity. This means I have no ability to pump water from my well, seek shelter in an air conditioned space or even breath filtered air through an air purifier. During winter months, I have been without electricity for up to three days and know that highly populated areas will have their electricity restored before mine. This means that a whole year's stored beef and chicken is defrosting in the freezer eliminating any possibility of income. and consumers are rurally isolated.

As a past recipient of the Disaster and Resiliency grant administered by Oregon Community Food Systems Network, I was able to apply three resiliency strategies during 2024 to help me prepare for future disasters.

1. The installation of two large water storage tanks allow me to capture rain during the fall and winter. This provides a water resource for fire mitigation and for emergency irrigation of growing crops. Unused water will be returned to the underground reservoir in the fall with new water collected each winter.
2. A purchased wood chipper allows me to collect small debris from my 2.5 acres of forest land and use the chipped mulch in between perennial crops. This reduces water use as it keeps the soil cool insulating the plants and creates a more defensible space on my property by removing fire fuels from my forested land.
3. Irrigation conversion to a drip tape system reduces water use during the growing system.

Being a small farmer in Josephine County is extremely difficult. Although many services are promoted as available in the “Rogue Valley”, they are only in Jackson County. Josephine County is the only county in the state of Oregon without an OSU Extension Service which eliminates all small farm support, educational programming, farm to school connections, master gardener, master preserver, SNAP ed, or 4-H programs. Moreover, most state Soil and Water District offices have a lending library of small farm equipment such as no-till drills, harrows or soil samplers. We do not have that either. At this time, we are relying on local community farmers markets and the Josephine County Food Hub to provide some of these services, but they need your financial support to build capacity and meet the demand.

It is time for Oregon to renew its commitment to our small farms and our local food system. They keep our communities fed and protected from the fluctuations of the traditional food supply chain. They are a vital part of our collective wellbeing, environmental stewardship, and the future of food. We are Neighbors Feeding Neighbors and growing strength through this economic support and resiliency planning. Please support HB 2979.

Thank you,

*Carrie Juchau*

Carrie Juchau  
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