

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

My name is Kathleen Dickson, and I am a small Food Hub Operator from Brookings. 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 supporting small farms and ranches and the outlets that they depend on, especially farmers markets and food hubs. These community institutions not only bring economic opportunity into rural Oregon, they connect urban and rural areas through agricultural marketplaces, provide access to local food, and tap into nutrition assistance programs that spread these fresh Oregon grown fruits, vegetables, and meats to people who might not otherwise be able to get them. We need to make sure that these vital small businesses can withstand the natural disasters, worsening storms, and unpredictable weather that has been increasing in recent years.

This personally impacts me because:

- As a Food Hub Operator, I was able to acquire new infrastructure in 2024 through HB 2979 that now allows me to create a larger market for local producers
- This new infrastructure also allows me to purchase more produce from local farmers year-round, since I now have increased refrigeration capacity
- This new infrastructure also now allows me to improve my quality control, which results in better customer satisfaction and more word-of-mouth referrals
- Finally, this new infrastructure creates a safer and more comfortable work environment, allowing for a pleasant pack-out experience

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,

Kathleen Dickson

OtterBee's Market

Brookings