

Submitter: Erin Maidlow

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2979

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

My name is Erin Maidlow and I am the Executive Director of Umpqua Valley Farm to School from Roseburg. 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 the Board President of our local farmers market which serves over 90 small businesses, and the Executive Director of Umpqua Valley Farm to School, which provides technical assistance to local farms along with farm field trips, purchasing of over \$40,000 in local products direct from farms each year, and workshops to increase capacity and sustainability of small farms, these funds are critical in aiding producers and food hubs to continue throughout natural disasters and become more resilient to the ever-changing climate. In the past five years, we have seen devastating fires which have affected every producer in our county due to smoke. We have had extreme heat at temperatures between 110-115 degrees F consistently, each summer, which have killed off thousands of dollars in crops and crippling stress to producers. We have seen snow storms in May once summer crops have already been planted, causing farmers to replant thousands of acres, and we have seen devastation to structures from massive snowfall which is historically uncommon in our area until recent years. These funds have contributed to expanded markets for producers, allowing them to sell more products locally when supply issues persist in grocery stores. It has allowed farmers to rebuild structures to withstand natural disasters. It has provided PPE for producers and vendors to use during wildfires, which aids in being outdoors on farms and markets, and it has provided critical funding to infrastructure for several farmers in Douglas County, along with our commercial kitchen and food hub at Rainbow Kitchen, which allows producers to scale their business and moves products throughout Southwestern Oregon.

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,

Erin Maidlow
Umpqua Valley Farm to School
Roseburg