



February 6, 2025

To: Co-Chairs Ken Helm & Mark Owens & Members of the
House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

From: The Oakridge-Westfir Tree Planting Festival

Subject: House Bill 2979

The Oakridge-Westfir Tree Planting Festival (TPF) is writing to express strong support for HB 2979 and urge continued investment in Oregon's farmers' markets, which serve as critical infrastructure for local economies, small farms, and food access programs.

The TPF, now in its 72nd year, demonstrates how farmers markets and environmental stewardship go hand in hand in building resilient communities. Our festival features the Westfir-Oakridge Local Food Hub (WOLFH) Farmers Market and plant sale that brings together local vendors, farmers, and community members.

The 4,500 residents of Oakridge, Westfir, and unincorporated Lane County, face disadvantages due to low-income status, unemployment, high school education status, asthma, heart disease, and transportation barriers, and have experienced a declared disaster for 3 out of the past 5 years. Our community relies on equitable food access, SNAP/Double Up Food Bucks, and excess food donation programs provided by WOLFH. The vendors and farmers supported WOLFH.

The farmers market portion of our festival is experiencing the same challenges that markets across Oregon face - extreme weather events that impact operations and sales. The Farmers Market Climate Resilience Grant Fund and SNAP support grants are crucial for helping markets like ours implement cooling strategies, upgrade infrastructure, and maintain accessibility through programs like SNAP/Double Up Food Bucks.



Our festival demonstrates why these programs matter:

- Our farmers' market and plant sale provide critical access to local food and plants
- We bring together multiple community organizations including the Forest Service, local trails alliances, and conservation groups to educate about climate resilience
- We engage youth through our Tree Planting Teens program, building the next generation of environmental stewards

Oregon Farmers Market Association and Farmers Market Fund required sustained state funds to strengthen our farmers' markets and local food systems. We cannot afford to fall behind. Please support HB 2979 to keep our markets strong, our farmers supported, and our communities equitably fed.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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