

TO: House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
FROM: Sara Cross, Producer Support Funds Program Manager
RE: Support for HB 2979
DATE: February 4, 2025



Co-Chairs Helm and Owens, and members of the Committee:

Oregon Food Bank supports HB 2979 because we believe it is crucial that Oregon continue our investments in local food systems 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 as someone who works with small farmers, ranchers and fishers all over the state. I see the impact that they have in real time when they are able to have access to low barrier dollars that allow them access to small changes or upgrades in their operation that not only affect their business in being able to provide more/healthier products but also how funding these measures in a preventative way has a much more lasting effect on them to do the work that involves them feeding their community while taking care of the land. Through that community connection there is the trust and through that trust is the ability to serve people more specifically because they get to know their community deeper. It allows for connections to be forged and/or strengthened to solidify the foundation in the community around them - and ripple out to beyond their farm and their community. This is amplified when we zoom out to realize that by doing these small acts across the state we are growing something bigger.

This is such an important asset to have as we continue to build food systems that can withstand the fallout of global supply chains breaking and keep the local economies going through mutual aid and measures that speak to all facets of sustainability.

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 for your time

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