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On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Early Childhood and Behavioral Health  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB779

Oregon's farmers, ranchers, and agricultural workers play a critical role in sustaining our economy, food supply, and rural communities. However, they also face significant stressors, including financial instability, extreme weather events, rising production costs, and increasing regulatory pressures. These challenges contribute to higher rates of anxiety, depression, and suicide among agricultural workers than the general population.

The AgriStress Helpline is a confidential, 24/7 mental health resource specifically tailored to the unique needs of Oregon's agricultural community. To ensure its continued operation and expansion, we respectfully request an appropriation from the General Fund to support this vital service.

### The Need for Funding

#### 1. Mental Health Crisis in Agriculture

- Farmers and ranchers experience some of the highest suicide rates of any profession.
- The nature of agricultural work—long hours, isolation, and economic uncertainty—creates barriers to accessing traditional mental health services.

#### 2. Limited Rural Mental Health Services

- Many rural areas lack adequate mental health infrastructure.
- The AgriStress Helpline fills a critical gap by providing immediate, anonymous, and culturally competent support tailored to the agricultural workforce.

#### 3. The AgriStress Helpline's Proven Impact

- Available 24/7 to farmers, ranchers, and their families in distress.
- Trained professionals familiar with agricultural stressors provide crisis intervention and referrals.
- Expanding outreach and resources will increase utilization and reduce mental health crises in rural Oregon.

### Funding Request & Allocation

We request an appropriation from the General Fund to:

? Sustain 24/7 Helpline Services – Maintain operations, staffing, and infrastructure.

? Expand Outreach & Awareness – Ensure Oregon’s agricultural community knows about and trusts this resource.

? Enhance Crisis Response & Referral Network – Strengthen connections with mental health providers and community organizations.

#### Expected Outcomes & Benefits

- Increased use of mental health resources among agricultural workers.
- Reduced suicide rates and improved well-being in rural communities.
- Stronger state commitment to agricultural sustainability, recognizing mental health as essential to long-term farm viability.

Thank you