

Submitter: Wesley Ward  
On Behalf Of: Oregon Agricultural Trust  
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On  
Natural Resources  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5039

Co-Chair Frederick, Co-Chair Levy, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board's (OWEB) 2025-2027 budget, especially the inclusion of funding for the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (OAHF).

I write to you today to share my strong support for \$17.3 million in funding OAHF in the 2025 Oregon Legislative Session. OAHF helps Oregon leverage a remarkable 2:1 federal match through programs including the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and protects working ranch and farmlands for their agriculture and natural resource values.

My wife and I moved to Oregon almost nine years ago, drawn in large part by Oregon's reputation as a "green" state and the effectiveness of OWEB and the state's land use laws in protecting Oregon's farmland, forests, and watersheds. Since then I've become concerned about the annual rate of farmland loss and the growing difficulty of young farmers buying quality farmland. The Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program is working well and the Oregon Agricultural Trust is supporting that work with its outreach to farmers and its own fundraising, But the proposed appropriation is central to that work.

Especially important are the efforts to help the next generation of Oregon farmers to find land and keep it in production. These programs have strong bipartisan support and deserve the Committee's favorable vote.

Thank you, Wesley Ward, Portland