



February 26, 2025

Co Chairs Frederick and Levy, and members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 5039, the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) budget.

The Oregon Seed Council is a trade organization that brings together seed farmers, marketers, brokers, researchers, and others involved in the Oregon seed industry from when the seed is planted to when the seed ultimately makes it to the hands of consumers. Through our membership, the Oregon Seed Council represents approximately 1,300 grass, legume, and specialty seed growers in Oregon, and our industry drives employment in many rural areas of the state, employing an estimated 10,000 Oregonians.

I am writing to express the Oregon Seed Council's strong support for the inclusion of the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (OAHP) funding provided for in the OWEB budget via HB 3131.

The OAHP, created in 2017, was developed with agricultural and conservation groups with a primary goal of preventing farmland fragmentation.

HB 3131, which passed the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water unanimously and has 37 legislative sponsors, includes an investment of **\$17.3 million** in funding the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (OAHP) in the 2025 Oregon Legislative Session.

OAHP helps Oregon leverage a remarkable **2:1 federal match** through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and protects working ranch and farmlands for their agriculture and natural resource values.

The average age of a farmer in Oregon is 60, and the next generation needs tools to navigate how to keep our productive lands working without fragmentation of land. The OAHP, which is a voluntary program, provides a tool for farmers to realize some of the equity in their land without being forced to sell portions of it, making OAHP an invaluable resource to navigate succession planning.

Thank you for your support and consideration of this important program and an investment in Oregon's agricultural community.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Megan Chuinard".

Megan Chuinard
Executive Director
Oregon Seed Council