

OREGON
BUSINESS
FOR CLIMATE

March 5, 2025

Sent via OLIS.

TO: Chair Golden, Vice Chair Nash, and Members of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire

RE: **Support for SB 887 – Organic Policy Specialist at ODA – A Smart Investment to Grow a Uniquely Oregon Opportunity**

FR: Oregon Business for Climate

Dear Chair Golden, Vice Chair Nash, and Members of the Committee:

Oregon Business for Climate is a league of businesses, large and small, across the state in a range of industries from manufacturing to agriculture to transportation to healthcare. We believe climate leadership is critical to the health of Oregon’s industries and communities, and will help our state re-emerge as a leader thriving in the growing clean economy. To that end, our mission is to advance urgent, ambitious, equitable climate policies and programs designed to help spur innovation and economic opportunity while effectively and responsibly reducing emissions.

In short, we are a statewide group of businesses that see both the **imperative** and the **opportunity** of taking bold action to address climate change. We believe Oregon can and must do more to address climate change, that business plays a critical role in this progress, and that aggressive action is good for Oregon.

Oregon Business for Climate strongly supports SB 887 to create an Organic Policy Specialist position at the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA). Organic agriculture is a climate solution and it boosts Oregon’s resilience – but growing this sector requires support, and a is a great example where a modest investment from the state creates a huge ROI for our farmers, our communities, and our economy.

A Climate Solution that Needs to GROW

Organic farming improves soil health – which also means more **carbon is captured in the soil**. This sequestration has tremendous potential, as identified by Oregon’s Climate Action Commission, and can be a critical part of Oregon’s solution to the climate crisis. At the same time, this **healthier soil also holds much more moisture, making these lands more resilient** to heat and droughts, reducing temperatures, and boosting the overall resilience of Oregon crops, communities, and our economy. Organic production also results in cleaner water, more biodiversity, and healthier communities.

In 2022, the legislature declared organic one of five “emerging sectors” in Oregon and appropriated funds for economic assessments of each sector. The assessment laid out several opportunities to build economic, agricultural, environmental, and community resilience through the organic sector. Oregon must continue to

prioritize support for organic agriculture and there is a **growing need for a policy specialist who understands the principles and practices of organic farming, production, and market creation.**

This position would lead the facilitation, marketing, and trade of organic products, and ensure inner- and inter-agency integration of policies supporting organic practices.

As trade uncertainties and extreme weather events disrupt Oregon's food and agricultural systems, organic practices offer solutions that support agricultural and economic resilience and offer new market opportunities.

An Economic Opportunity Especially Suited to Oregon

Having an Organic Policy Specialist at ODA offers long-term support for an agricultural sector that offers many benefits to Oregon and its residents. Ranking 12th in the nation, **Oregon has 750 organic businesses and 30% of Oregon organic farms plan on increasing production over the next 5 years** (source: Organic Trade Association).

Oregon is ideally situated to be a leader in the rapidly growing organic industry, which surpassed \$63 billion in 2023, but will need to make both public and private investments in order to fully actualize this opportunity. We also have a built-in market to continue fostering the growth of this sector, with over 90% of Oregon households already buying Organic foods (source: Organic Trade Association).

But Oregon is losing ground compared to other organic market-leading states across the country like Washington and Pennsylvania – so the importance for this position can't be overstated, a policy specialist who understands the principles and practices of organic farming, production, and market creation.

Organic producers often find themselves on the frontline of innovation, trying out new practices and learning through trial and error in pursuit of sustainability—all within strict regulatory confines, and with nominal federal and state support. Again, this is where an Organic Policy Specialist, working with the industry in Oregon, can foster support and share these best practices.

The ODA Organic Policy Specialist position is an investment that will drive economic, resilience, climate, and community benefits. Oregon Business for Climate strongly urges your support for SB 887.

Sincerely,



Tim Miller, Director, Oregon Business for Climate