

## Testimony in Support of SB 785 from Rep. Bobby Levy

Chair Frederick, Vice-Chair Weber and Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Bobby Levy and I serve as the State Representative for House District 58, which includes Umatilla, Union, and Wallowa Counties.

I am here to express my strong support for SB 785, which establishes the Agriculture Education Scholarship Program. This bill is a crucial investment in agriculture education and workforce development, ensuring that rural communities have the educators they need to prepare the next generation of farmers, ranchers, and natural resource professionals.

Agriculture education is critical to Oregon's economy and future. Career and technical education programs in agriculture, plant sciences, natural resources, and food processing provide students with hands-on experience that leads to high-demand jobs. However, rural communities often struggle to attract and retain qualified agriculture educators, which limits opportunities for students interested in pursuing careers in the industry.

SB 785 directly addresses this issue by offering scholarships to prospective agriculture educators who commit to teaching in rural communities for a period equal to their years of scholarship support. This ensures a steady pipeline of trained professionals to support Oregon's 96% family-owned farms and its \$6.7 billion agriculture industry. This approach is no different from programs that incentivize healthcare providers to serve in rural areas, recognizing that certain professions are essential to the well-being and sustainability of these communities. Just as we support rural doctors and nurses through loan repayment and scholarships, we must do the same for agriculture educators—because the strength of Oregon's natural resource industries depends on the education and training of future generations.

I urge my colleagues to support this measure and help build a sustainable future for our natural resource industries.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bobby Levy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long, sweeping underline.

Representative Bobby Levy  
House District 58