



March 10, 2025

Chair Frederick, Vice Chair Weber, and Members of the Senate Committee on Education,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 784, SB 785, and SB 786 - a legislative package that supports building Oregon's natural resource workforce through education and career pathways.

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.

Our industry, like others, has identified a strong interest in supporting and ensuring academic opportunities for students interested in a career in the seed industry. A strong and future-ready agricultural workforce is critical to ensuring the long-term viability of the seed industry and agriculture broadly - and these important bills (SB 784, SB 785, and SB 786) work together to ensure students have the educational opportunities, industry connections, and qualified instructors they need to succeed as they look to pursue a career in the natural resource sector.

Many students are eager to pursue careers in agriculture, forestry, and natural resources, and our industries need, but do not always have the opportunities for early exposure to the industry or seamless pathways to higher education and industry jobs.

The proposed package offers two bills that expand access to dual credit and career pathways:

- **SB 784** expands Oregon's dual credit programs to include agriculture, forestry, and natural resource courses, allowing students to earn college credit while in high school.
- **SB 786** ensures students receive academic credit at public colleges and universities for participating in hands-on, leadership-based Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs) like:
 - Future Farmers of America (FFA)
 - Future Natural Resource Leaders (FNRL)

These programs allow college to be more accessible for students, accelerating pathways to careers. Dual credit makes college more affordable and accelerates career readiness by ensuring students receive credit for real-world skills.

The development of stronger education pathways means a skilled, workforce-ready generation for Oregon's natural resource industries.

In addition, the package includes one bill that ensures qualified educators for high school agriculture and natural resource programs:

- **SB 785** establishes the Agriculture Education Scholarship Program, covering tuition for students pursuing degrees in agriculture, forestry, and natural resource education—if they commit to teaching in rural communities after graduation.

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The right teacher helps students gain industry connections for internships, college programs, and jobs - and this bill helps build that support in the education workforce.

Each of these bills help ensure students interested in Oregon's natural resource industry have the tools available to develop the skills in and pursue natural resource careers.

We urge you to support SB 784, SB 785, and SB 786.

Thank you for your consideration.

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

Megan Chuinard
Executive Director
Oregon Seed Council