

Submitter: Michael Seely
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On
Natural Resources
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB5502

March 20, 2025

Co-Chair Frederick, co-Chair Levy, Co-Chair Emerson, and Members of the Joint Subcommittee on Natural Resources:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of SB 5502

For three generations, my family has cultivated mint on our farm near Clatskanie, Oregon, using traditional agricultural practices passed down through the years. We specialize in growing single-cut, premium-quality heirloom Black Mitcham Peppermint, known for its exceptional flavor and aroma in tea leaf and essential oil production.

Almost 20 years ago, our journey took an unexpected turn when the domestic mint market faced a significant downturn. With prices falling and demand shifting, we were forced to rethink the future of our farm. That challenge led us to diversify into candy production, using our premium mint to create peppermint patties and other confections. What began as a way to adapt has since grown into a thriving business, with our peppermint patties now enjoyed by customers across the country and around the world.

Expanding into candy manufacturing and national/international markets was no small task. We had to learn new production processes, navigate regulatory requirements, and identify potential buyers—an overwhelming prospect for a small, family-run operation. Fortunately, the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) stepped in as a vital resource, helping us every step of the way.

The team at ODA provided invaluable guidance on market development, trade opportunities, and export logistics. Their expertise in connecting Oregon food producers with domestic and international buyers opened doors that would have been difficult, if not impossible, to access on our own. Through their support, we were able to participate in trade shows, gain exposure in key markets, and take advantage of programs that helped offset the costs of growing our business.

Beyond their technical expertise, what truly stands out about the Oregon Department of Agriculture is their commitment to supporting Oregon's food and agriculture businesses. They genuinely care about the success of small

producers like us, taking the time to understand our challenges and tailoring their assistance to meet our needs. Whether it was helping us navigate international trade regulations or introducing us to potential buyers, their support has been instrumental in our growth.

As a third-generation mint farmer, I am deeply grateful for the partnership we

have built with the Oregon Department of Agriculture. Their efforts have not only helped us expand our business but have also reinforced the value of Oregon's agricultural products in markets around the world. Thanks to their guidance, we've turned a challenge into an opportunity, and I look forward to continuing to grow with their support in the years ahead.

Sincerely,
Mike Seely
Seely Mint Farms