



Service Employees
International Union
Local 503

Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 1259
Salem, OR 97309-1259

3470 Pipebend Pl NE
Salem, OR 97301

525 NE Oregon St.
Portland, OR 97232

1.844.503.SEIU (7348)

www.seiu503.org

To: Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Subcommittee on Natural Resources

From: Mike Powers, SEIU Local 503

RE: Support for SB 5502

Date: March 26, 2026

Co-chair Fredrick, Co-chair Levy, Members of the Committee:

My name is Mike Powers, and I am with SEIU Local 503, a labor union representing approximately 70,000 workers across every county in Oregon. We are proud to represent the classified staff at the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA). Today, we express our qualified support for SB 5502 and urge additional budget support for ODA.

The dedicated and skilled staff at ODA play a vital role in Oregon's agricultural industry. They ensure our food is safe, certify and promote world-class agricultural products, protect and enhance water quality, and uphold consumer trust—whether that is verifying fuel measurements at the pump or addressing countless other essential functions. Their commitment to ODA's mission and to Oregon agriculture is unwavering.

We appreciate the investments included in the Governor's Recommended Budget (GRB). The planned IT modernization will position ODA for the future, and our members welcome the addition of an agency safety officer. We see the GRB as a solid starting point and urge this committee to expand support for Oregon agriculture and rural communities.

However, we are concerned that critical funding is missing. It is my understanding that the GRB does not include resources to combat the Vine Mealy Bug or control grasshopper infestations—both of which require attention. Additionally, we oppose the omission of funding to eradicate the Japanese Beetle in Oregon. We appreciate SB 576's effort to correct this oversight and fully support the bill. We also endorse SB 352, which provides crucial support for weed control in rural areas, and SB 356, which funds the Invasive Species Council. Lastly, we support the fee adjustments proposed in HB 5503.

Now more than ever, increased support for ODA is essential. Agriculture is central to Oregon's culture, economy, landscape, and identity, yet farm families are struggling. The Oregon Farm Bureau reports that farm and ranch operating costs have risen significantly over the past decade. In 2022, 69% of family farms and ranches in Oregon experienced a net cash



loss, placing multigenerational farms at risk. Oregon's producer families, rural communities, and distinctive agricultural economy cannot sustain these pressures without stronger state support.

In the short term, we urge this committee to strengthen the ODA budget in ways that directly benefit Oregon agriculture. We urge the full funding we propose here, and then some. In the long term, we need a strategic plan to ensure the future of Oregon agriculture. The dedicated professionals at ODA are well-positioned to help lead this effort, and we encourage you to utilize their expertise.