

To: Co-chairs Helm and Owens, Vice-Chair Finger McDonald, and members of the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources and Water:

My name is Charlena Kea, and I am a beginning farmer in Portland, Oregon. I spent last season completing a farm apprenticeship through Rogue Farm Corps and now work on small farm operations in the greater Portland region, with plans to start up my own farm in the 2026 season. I'm writing in strong support of HB 3372.

As someone trying to break into the world of regenerative and sustainable small scale farming, I can say firsthand—access to affordable farmland with water rights is a huge barrier to entry for new farmers. Opportunities like being able to grow on a half-acre with limited, responsible water use are one of the only feasible ways people like me can even begin. My long term goal is to run a small hand-scale farm operation that probably will never expand over a half-acre. This scale and access gives us a start and a foothold in an industry that often feels gated by wealth, generational ownership, and institutional barriers.

My passion for farming comes from a desire to grow culturally significant food for marginalized communities. I want to emphasize the importance of culturally important food grown at a small-scale, in service of our community, and point out that the law currently suggests a harmful message that an ornamental lawn is of greater importance.

The small-scale farmers that I work with and the farming practices that I want to integrate into my future operation focus on regenerative practice and working with the land through responsible stewardship. We grow intentionally, and with deep care for the long lasting impacts we will have on the soil. We strive to feed people nutrient dense and quality produce, offering local alternatives, and a system based on longevity. Without this kind of access to water and land, many passionate, hardworking farmers and future farmers will face a discouraging barrier to the work they do.

I urge you to pass HB 3372, and protect the right of small farmers to grow and share food within reasonable, already-limited water use. This bill isn't about reckless expansion—it's about giving people like me the chance to serve our communities.

Thank you,
Charlena Kea