

Submitter: Laura Strom
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee
On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB5525

Co-Chair Helm, Co-Chair Owens, and committee members

I am a certified Oregon State University Extension Master Gardener™ volunteer who strongly supports the proposed OSU Statewide Public Service Programs funding (OSU Statewides) requested in HB 2408 to continue OSU Statewides' mission for a resilient and prosperous future for all Oregonians.

The OSU Extension Service is one of three statewide public service programs. It engages people, families, businesses, and communities to help solve problems, manage resources, and develop leadership in both rural and urban areas.

In HB 2408, the OSU Statewides request a total of \$207.2M which includes a funding increase of \$17.5M for full continued service level funding to sustain core mission programs and services as well as \$6M in new funding to build capacity to bolster and expand programming in critical areas across OSU Extension, Agriculture Experiment Stations and the Forest Research Lab.

Through OSU Extension Master Gardener Program, I helped create and open, in collaboration with the Newport Public Library, Lincoln County's first seed library. The Grow with Us Seed Library provided over 2,500 different seeds to Lincoln County residents for free and this seed library is now maintained and supplied through the volunteer work of Master Gardeners. Without the Master Gardener training & volunteer hours, the Grow with Us Seed Library would not have been possible, as most public libraries don't have the staff or the hours available to run and maintain this valuable asset in our community.

Without full continued service level funding essential OSU Extension services, staff and programs will falter and have a long-lasting and long-reaching impact on the progress already achieved in creating research-based knowledge and delivering evidence-based programs that strengthen communities and economies, sustain natural resources and promote healthy families and individuals. Shortfalls in previous years' state funding to the OSU Statewides have negatively impacted too many critical areas across Oregon's communities, farms, food systems and natural resources. If the OSU Statewides are not fully funded as requested: a total of \$207.2M, there will be even more serious shortfalls and cuts from which some programs may not be able to completely recover.

As an OSU Extension Master Gardener trained volunteer, I have seen the effects of underfunding the continuing service levels and strongly urge you to Support HB 2408 and recognize the ongoing, essential services provided by the OSU Statewides to Oregonians for over a century. The state's investment in the OSU Statewides will help ensure that OSU can continue to provide the practical research and faculty expertise that we, as volunteers, rely on to serve our communities.

With your SUPPORT of HB 2408, the OSU Statewides will be well-positioned to tackle these issues head-on, fostering a more resilient and prosperous future for all residents of Oregon.

Laura Strom