



Testimony on HB 5006 in Support of HB 2979 to the Joint Committee on Ways and Means

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Shimanek Bridge Farm, Scio

4/18/25

Co-Chairs Lieber and Sanchez, Vice-Chairs Girod, Gomber and Smith, Members of the Committee,

We are writing today to urge your support for fully funding the provisions of HB 2979 within the larger spending bill, HB 5006. We farm and ranch on nearly 70 acres in the Scio area, raising grass fed beef and goat, pasture raised pork, and vegetables. In a typical year we finish and direct-market 10-20 beef, 25-50 goats and 10-20 pigs. We primarily sell our products through the Salem Saturday Farmers Market, with some sales to restaurants and food carts, and through a farm stand.

Earlier this year, HB 2979 passed unanimously out of the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water with strong support from Oregon farmers, ranchers, food hubs, farmers markets, and related community organizations. The bill builds on past successful bipartisan efforts from the Legislature that made crucial investments in helping farms and ranches become more resilient in the face of extreme weather, natural disasters, rising temperatures and water scarcity.

HB 2979 supports Oregon's local food systems and small and mid-sized family farms and ranches across the state. It also supports the farmers markets and food hubs many of these farms and ranches depend on for sales, distribution and storage. Farmers markets and food hubs connect rural and urban Oregon, providing economic opportunities for producers who sell directly to consumers, while ensuring continued access to healthy local food even during times of national food system disruption. They are a key access point for low-income Oregonians on supplemental nutrition assistance programs, helping them purchase Oregon grown fresh fruits and vegetables and healthy, nutrient dense local meat products they might not otherwise have access to.

Like many farms in the region, our farm experienced economic losses during the 2021 heat dome and related drought. We lost valuable forage for our livestock at a critical time of year as the heat did significant damage to our pastures. Despite purchasing emergency supplemental feed, livestock performance suffered, and the situation required expensive pasture reestablishment in areas where extreme heat effectively terminated well-established perennial grasses and clovers even in fields we had been irrigating.

To plan for future events such as the 2021 heat dome/drought, on our own initiative we have planted hundreds of trees and shrubs to create additional shade, planted diverse pasture seed

mixes, rotationally grazed livestock with longer rest periods before regrazing, and increased our focus on no-till management to build soil health and soil organic matter and to be less reliant on irrigation water.

In 2024, we received a small grant from the Farmer and Rancher Disaster Resilience Grant Program to build on this work. This allowed us to plant an additional 300 trees and shrubs to provide more shading, purchase a roller crimper implement and additional Oregon grown grass and clover seed for no-till management to help build soil-organic matter and prevent soil moisture loss in our pastures, and invest in shade cloth for our greenhouse and more water-efficient drip irrigation on our ¼ acre market vegetable plot. Many other farms and ranches also received grants like this through the Farmer and Rancher Disaster Resilience Grant Program.

Renewing and fully funding this program via HB 2979 will help more farmers and ranchers make investments in water efficiency, soil health, and disaster preparedness they might not otherwise be able to afford before the next time extreme weather, wildfire or other dangerous conditions return.

Again, we urge your support for funding HB 2979 as you decide what to include in HB 5006. Thank you for your consideration.

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