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On Behalf Of: OSU Extension  
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee  
On Education  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB5525

OSU Extension Service, Agricultural Experimental Station, branch stations, and Forestry Research Lab.

It is important to ensure that public service programs receive adequate funding.

Given the current economic uncertainty, employment issues, and the flow of goods and produce into the US, the public requires reliable information and resources to manage the challenges in the coming months.

The OSU Extension Service offers more than just gardening assistance through the over 2,300 certified and trained volunteers in Master Gardener™ Program. It provides essential programs and services that

help the public understand sustainability by offering resources and knowledge from trained volunteers in

various specialties. Here on the Coast in Newport, OSU Extension includes Sea Grant programs that

supply vital information about fisheries supporting coastal families and communities.

Most Extension

Offices have 4-H Programs that equip youth with modern farming techniques and necessary knowledge

for surrounding communities and businesses.

While online searches can provide gardening techniques, AI and the Internet lack tangible knowledge

specific to local growing conditions. It also does not offer expertise in handling pest problems without

relying on harmful chemicals. Not only is there one-on-one personal engagement and interaction, but our

community members come to rely on research-based, scientifically proven information from

knowledgeable, hands-on experienced Master Gardener volunteers which is shown in the over 38,000

questions answered by certified Master Gardener volunteers in 2024 at plant help desks, farmers

markets, emails and calls. In 2024, the statewide impact of OSU Extension certified Master Gardner

volunteers' is reflected in the over 157,213 volunteer hours (equivalent to 77 Full-Time Employees) and

over 167,950 Public Contacts, the over 40 tons of produce donated to food shares and food pantries.

Growing backyard gardens becomes crucial during times of food insecurity. Historical periods like World

War II and more recent events such as COVID-19 have seen people aiming to become more self-reliant

and resilient by creating gardening spaces at home, including community gardens.

Our communities require support, services, programs, and resources now more than ever. Reductions in

funding for OSU Statewide Public Service Programs should be avoided. At this time when the public

needs reliable information and resources to navigate economic uncertainties, it is critical to fully fund

the OSU Statewide Public Service Programs within HB 2408 to meet all of Oregon's diverse community needs.