

Submitter: Penny Feltner
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5006

To the Members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means,

I am here to urge your support of HB 2979, which will provide funding for Oregon's farmers and ranchers, as well as the food hubs and farmers markets that support our local producers.

Our working farm and ranchlands are tasked to maintain a triple bottom line: (1) to remain viable businesses (2) to steward soil, water, and natural habitats (3) and to produce food for Oregon communities. This is a lot of responsibility for the single proprietor operations representing over 80% of all farm operations in the state. Throw on top of that the challenges posed to farmers by climate change (irregular precipitation, increased frequency of extreme weather events, increased threats of wildfire and ice storms, decreased water availability, increased threats from pests...) and our local farms are facing a near impossible task.

Grant programs like those supported by HB 2979 provide critical assistance to these producers, filling gaps not currently met by other funding sources, and making investments in sustainable solutions accessible to our most impacted communities. We've seen the funding from these programs successfully distributed to producers across the state, and across production type. We've seen requests for these funds of more than three times as much as the amount of funding available, demonstrating both the urgent need and the strategic gaps in support they fill. We've seen these funds put to use making farms and ranches more resilient to the disruptions (both natural and human-made), shoring up the sustainability of our local and regional food supply, and ensuring ongoing viability of these operations.

These programs have been an investment in a sustainable future for rural communities and the food systems they support. HB 2979 passed unanimously out of the House Committee on Ag, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water with over 200 submissions of written testimony in support, including a letter signed by 248 farms, food hubs, farmers markets, community organizations and others. Furthermore, maintaining continuity of this funding is critical to maintain these programs as reliable sources of support that will allow producers to anticipate, plan, and make thoughtful use of resources.

With this in mind, I urge you to fund HB 2979 and support Oregon's diverse agricultural producers and rural communities.

Thank you,

-Penny Feltner