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Members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means:

I am here to urge your support of HB 2979, which provides funding for Oregon's farmers, ranchers, food hubs, and farmers markets.

Oregon's small farms and ranches, and the outlets where they market their products, are increasingly threatened by extreme weather events and wildfires. Supporting the Food Systems Resilience Programs in HB 2979 means investing in climate resilience, disaster preparedness, conservation and stewardship, rural economic development, and thriving small businesses all over our state. These investments benefit not just farmers and local food outlets but entire communities by fostering access to healthy, local food, creating hubs for community engagement and expanding nutrition incentive programs.

These programs impact me personally because our market has experienced many days of extreme weather which has negatively impacted the sales of local farms and food businesses. Closing completely or early due to heat and/or smoke is devastating to food access in our community and the sustainability of the small businesses we host. We need more support to create an adaptable market during these climate related events. Montavilla Farmers Market received an OFMA Climate Resilience Grant in 2024, a great starting point to help our market create the infrastructure it needs to withstand climate related events. This grant has helped us buy supplies such as heaters, umbrellas, misters, and gravel to help with erosion for our location. Because of the limited funding, we were only granted partial funding, indicating there is a lot more support needed for our market and other markets who didn't receive any funding.

This bill also supports SNAP acceptance and matching at our market through Growth Grants. Our community relies heavily on matching their SNAP benefits at the farmers markets (we distributed almost \$60,000 in matching currency, Double Up Food Bucks, in 2024 alone). Past Growth Grants we've received have helped our market create translated documents and way-finding signs for folks who are more comfortable reading a non-English language. These grants also pay for staff to execute the program, a necessary aspect as the reconciliation process is lengthy. If we want to keep this program running at our market and continue to lower barriers to access, support is needed through this bill.

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.

I urge you to fund HB 2979. Thank you.

Lisa Hebert

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