

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

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.

Food Hubs create economic value in their communities by providing dedicated physical and logistical infrastructure, and create markets for locally farmed, raised or caught products. Our hubs offer reliable, all weather and year round sales outlets, provide introductory wholesale & business development opportunities, and expand access to buyers of local foods by offering indoor pick-ups, home and wholesale delivery

Our network's hubs are farmer owned cooperatives, privately owned businesses, farmers, ranchers, small boat fishers, and non-profits. They offer distribution, online marketplaces, shared kitchen facilities, small scale co-packing and processing, and mobile markets. Our hubs serve approximately 80% of the counties in Oregon. Worker Safety & Infrastructure grants helped hubs purchase necessary equipment like refrigerated vehicles, lift-gates, walk-in coolers, ice makers, and electric pallet jacks,

Because this unique funding allowed network members to make durable investments in needed scale appropriate equipment and infrastructure, they have been able to permanently improve their capability to efficiently store, process and distribute, farm, ranch and fish products. Infrastructure expansion that leverages the expertise and services of existing networks and partners throughout the state, allows us to serve and connect markets across Oregon, directly resulting in new market opportunities for farm, ranch and fish producers. This increased system and logistics capacity improves regional disaster resilience while simultaneously building regional economies.

The Food Hub Worker Safety and Infrastructure Grants are improving worker safety equipment & infrastructure as well as strengthening local food distribution and regional food system resilience with increased warehousing & cold storage capacity. Food Hubs are a key supporter for small farms, ranches, and food businesses across the State.

This grant program awarded \$1M in grants to 36 food hubs in 22 counties across Oregon. We received requests for over \$2.3M, double what we were able to give.

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.

Continuity of this funding is critical! When funding is available one year and not the next, interest in these programs decreases, and it becomes difficult for farmers and community organizations to anticipate what will be available and take best advantage of it.

I urge you to fund HB 2979. Thank you.

Thank you,
Sydney DeLuna
Oregon Community Food System Network/Oregon Food Hub Network