

Submitter: Nicole Timm-Branch
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5006

Dear Joint Committee on Ways & Means,

My name is Nicole Timm-Branch, and I am the Executive Director of Central Oregon Locavore in Bend, Oregon. I am writing today to express my strong support for HB 2979 and to share how crucial it is that we continue investing in our local food system by supporting small farms, ranches, and the outlets they depend on—especially farmers markets and food hubs.

These community institutions not only bring critical economic opportunity into rural Oregon, but they also connect urban and rural communities through vibrant agricultural marketplaces. They ensure access to local, nutritious food and expand the reach of nutrition assistance programs, allowing fresh Oregon-grown fruits, vegetables, and meats to reach families who might not otherwise have access.

The need to bolster these systems is greater than ever. Natural disasters, worsening storms, and increasingly unpredictable weather threaten the livelihood of small farms and ranches across our state. We must ensure they have the resilience and resources to survive these challenges and continue feeding our communities.

At Central Oregon Locavore, we have seen firsthand the growing demand for local food and the changing needs of our community:

Increased Demand: Over the past few years our sales of fresh local food has grown significantly, to now selling more than 7,000 local products a week. Our customers tell us they shop us first for local food, particularly those seeking stable, sustainable sources of fresh produce and proteins.

Alternative Outlets: More farmers are turning to food hubs or stores like ours when weather events or other disruptions impact their ability to sell at in-person markets. We've become a critical safety net and sales channel during these times.

Economic Impact: Central Oregon Locavore moves over half a million pounds of local food annually, generating over \$2.6 million in local economic activity. Every dollar spent through our store strengthens rural livelihoods and reinvests in Oregon communities.

It is time for Oregon to renew its commitment to our small farms and local food

system. These producers keep our communities fed and insulated from the fluctuations of the centralized food supply chain. They are a vital part of our collective wellbeing, environmental stewardship, and the future of food in our state.

Please support HB 2979.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to Oregon's food future.

Sincerely,
Nicole Timm-Branch
Executive Director
Central Oregon Locavore
Bend, Oregon