

Testimony in Support of HB 2979 – Food Systems Resilience Programs

Members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means:

My name is Alexis Molinari, and I am the Market Director at Lane County Farmers Market in Eugene, Oregon. I write today in strong support of HB 2979, which provides urgently needed funding for Oregon's small farmers, food hubs, and farmers markets through the Food Systems Resilience Programs.

Farmers markets like ours are economic powerhouses. Across the state, markets support more than 7,000 small Oregon-based farms and food businesses and generate over \$61 million in revenue annually. At Lane County Farmers Market, we see firsthand how vital these outlets are—not just for the vendors who sell here, but for the entire community that relies on access to fresh, locally grown food.

And yet, these critical hubs are increasingly vulnerable. Oregon's farmers and food producers are already feeling the effects of climate change—extreme heat, wildfire smoke, flooding, and unpredictable winters are making it harder to farm and to operate markets safely. We've seen it ourselves: vendors who lose crops to late frosts, entire market days canceled due to smoke, and customer turnout drop during heat waves. HB 2979 directly addresses these challenges by investing in preparedness, infrastructure, and resilience.

These funds also make a tangible difference for market organizations like ours. In the first round of funding from the Climate Resilience Fund, 47 Oregon farmers markets received a total of \$740,000. Lane County Farmers Market was one of those recipients. That support allowed us to develop and implement a vendor climate resilience funding program that offers financial support to small farmers and business owners to complete projects that increase their market and operations resiliency during increasingly unpredictable conditions. This bill will ensure that markets across the state can access flexible, easy-to-implement grants that meet their real-world needs.

HB 2979 strengthens our local food systems from the ground up. It recognizes that farmers markets are not just places to buy produce—they are community institutions that provide food access to vulnerable populations, support regional economic development, and offer essential pathways for farmers and food entrepreneurs to grow their businesses. These investments ripple outward in powerful ways.

I urge your support of HB 2979 to ensure the continuity of this critical funding. Oregon's farmers, market managers, and food system partners need stable, predictable support to continue feeding our communities and building a climate-resilient food future.

Thank you for your time and your commitment to the people who grow, sell, and share Oregon's food.

In community,
Alexis Molinari
Market Director, Lane County Farmers Market