

Submitter: Darcie Spar
On Behalf Of: Oregon Farmers Markets Association
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5006

Members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means:

My name is Darcie Spar and I am a dedicated farmers market customer and Board member of Oregon Farmers Markets Association (OFMA) from Tigard. I urge your support of HB 2979, which provides funding for Oregon's farmers markets, farmers, ranchers, and food hubs.

Farmers markets and food producers in Oregon are facing increasing climate challenges, such as wildfires, extreme heat, flooding and severe winter weather that threaten their long-term sustainability. 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 farmers markets but entire communities by fostering access to healthy, local food, creating hubs for community engagement and expanding nutrition incentive programs.

Oregon farmers markets are economic powerhouses, drawing millions of visitors annually, and supporting more than 7,000 small, Oregon-based farms and businesses. They generate \$61 million in revenue and infuse their communities with economic stability.

In the first round of funding supported by the Climate Resilience funds, 47 Oregon farmers markets received a total of \$740,000 in grant funding. Continuity of this funding is critical! A majority of markets in Oregon are managed by one or two staff members, many part time and underpaid, or not paid at all. HB 2979 bill funds a grant program that is easy for these busy market managers to access and implement. And 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.

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 encourage you to fund HB 2979 and make an important investment in creating strong local food systems throughout our beautiful state. Thank you!

Darcie Spar