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April 29, 2025

Ways and Means Joint Subcommittee on Education
Attn: Co-Chairs Senator Janeen Sollman and Representative Ricki Ruiz
Oregon State Capitol
Salem, OR

RE: Testimony in Support of SB 5525

Dear Co-Chairs Sollman, Ruiz and Members of the Committee:

I am writing in support of SB 5525, which I believe represents a strategic investment in strengthening resilience and expanding economic opportunity within Oregon's vital food and agricultural sector. This bill directly addresses the critical needs of Oregon State University's Statewide Public Service Programs (OSU Statewides), including the Extension Service and Agricultural Experiment Stations throughout the state.

For the past fifteen years, I have served as the Chief Executive of Oregon Tilth, a leading nonprofit certifier, educator, and advocate for organic agriculture. Headquartered in Corvallis, Oregon Tilth works with farmers, processors, and distributors across Oregon, the United States, and Mexico. We are accredited by the USDA to offer organic certification services under the National Organic Program and certify more than 1,100 farming operations of diverse crops, geographies, and scales. Oregon Tilth is the largest organic certifier in the state.

A resilient Oregon depends on a resilient food system. The economic, environmental, and social challenges we face as a society are mirrored in our food and agricultural systems. By addressing these challenges through a strategic, multidisciplinary, and collaborative approach, OSU Statewides can play a key role in catalyzing opportunities for sustainable practices that drive economic growth and long-term viability—especially within the organic sector.

I can personally attest to the importance of OSU Statewides, particularly the Extension Service and Agricultural Experiment Stations.

Oregon Tilth has maintained a formal partnership with Oregon State University since 2009, investing over \$450,000 to date. This public-private collaboration has not only helped sustain faculty positions during financially challenging years by enabling OSU to leverage matching funds, but it has also led to the launch of key initiatives—most notably, the establishment of the Organic Agriculture Program at OSU. Our close work with OSU faculty working at Experiment Stations in partnership with Extension staff has enabled the transfer of innovative

organic practices into the field and supported research, outreach, and technical assistance aligned with the priorities of organic producers.

Across Oregon, communities face growing needs to sustain the health of our people, our food systems, and our natural resources. Meeting these needs and building a resilient Oregon requires robust investment in the OSU Statewides. However, the current capacity of these programs is insufficient to meet the increasing demand. During the 2025–27 biennium, OSU Statewides seek to maintain current operations, expand their ability to meet core mission priorities, and make strategic investments that will support community resilience and statewide economic development.

While I understand the many competing demands on state resources, failing to invest in the research, education, and technical assistance needed to sustain a resilient food system puts our shared future at risk. SB 5525 provides the kind of support necessary to adapt and innovate in an era of unprecedented change.

Thank you for your consideration and for your support of SB 5525 and the vital investments it makes in Oregon's food system resilience.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Schreiner". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Chris Schreiner
Chief Executive Officer
Oregon Tilth