

April 30, 2025

To: Way and Means Joint Subcommittee on Education

Re: Support of HB 5525 Oregon Statewide Extension Programs

My name is Bryan Brown and I am a volunteer coordinator for the Oregon Olive Growers Association (OOGA). I'm writing in support of the OSU Extension Service and their olive research, the *Olea Project*.

The Oregon Olive industry is a developing industry in Oregon, and OSU research and support is critical as we look to grow and adapt to climate change.

- Olive (*Olea Europaea*) is a Mediterranean tree grown for its unusual fruit, which after processing is consumed whole but also produces a highly prized oil used world-wide. Although not a traditional growing region, in western Oregon (Willamette Valley and Umpqua Valley) existing small-scale growers have shown that we can **now** grow, harvest and produce top-quality olive oil.
- The OSU *Olea Project* is providing research findings on growing olives in western Oregon and dovetails nicely into the ongoing issues around adapting to climate change. Tolerance of winter cold, occasional early freezes and a cool growing region are challenges for this budding industry.
- The *Olea project* is evaluating 118 cultivars of olive, planted in 2021, on 1 acre at the OSU North Willamette Research and Extension Center in Aurora for adaptability to our region. A research project involving this many olive cultivars has never been attempted anywhere in the world. The project simultaneously provides innovative data on growing olives in cool regions worldwide while addressing real local issues.
- Because the work is unprecedented, the OSU *Olea* work is drawing attention from potential European collaborators as well as domestic researchers and growers. The possibility exists to greatly expand the number of cultivars being researched by including some of the many (>1,000) cultivars which exist in Europe and not in North America.
- Only one OSU faculty member is dedicated to the project, at 0.2FTE and this support expires at the end of 2023. Two other OSU Small Farm Program faculty also support the research currently in addition to other dedicated responsibilities.

- Emerald Ash Borer has been discovered in native Oregon Ash trees, and research shows that olive trees are a host. This highlights the need to understand the dynamics of this pest and interactions within local olive orchards.

Sincerely,

Bryan Brown

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