



February 11, 2026

House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
Oregon Legislative Assembly

RE: Support for HB 4006

Co-Chair Helm, Co-Chair Owens, Vice-Chair McDonald, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Oregon Farm Bureau (OFB), we respectfully submit testimony in support of HB 4006. The bill represents a thoughtful, basin-specific refinement to Oregon water law that reflects how irrigation infrastructure in the Mid-Columbia region already operates on the ground while easing administrative burdens for agency personnel and the region's water user community without undermining the integrity of existing water rights.

OFB is the state's most inclusive agriculture organization, proudly representing over 6,500 family farms and ranches that produce more than 220 agricultural commodities. From hops and hazelnuts to cattle, cranberries, and timber with operations spanning from just a few acres to thousands, our members utilize all farming methods including organic, conventional, regenerative, biotech, and even no-tech.

Importantly, the bill does not expand the rate, volume, or season of use of any existing water right approved by the Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD). The total amount of water diverted from the Columbia River remains fully capped by existing permits and certificates. This legislation simply provides a more efficient administrative framework for managing water that has already been legally authorized and is already being measured and regulated in real time.

At its core, HB 4006 acknowledges the reality of shared diversion structures and integrated delivery systems serving multiple agricultural producers. Rather than requiring artificial, behind-the-diversion accounting of commingled water, the bill allows flexibility within a clearly defined river reach—while maintaining the fundamental safeguards of non-injury, priority date protection, and OWRD oversight. This basin-specific approach empowers

water users to collaborate regionally, share infrastructure responsibly, and optimize water delivery during drought and peak demand periods, all within existing legal limits.

The collaborative structure outlined in HB 4006 promotes both flexibility and accountability. By working through locally governed entities and established mapping processes, water users remain directly engaged in how their water is managed. The reporting requirements to the Legislature further ensure transparency and measurable outcomes, including groundwater savings and system efficiencies.

There are also meaningful financial benefits to this approach. By reducing unnecessary administrative duplication and eliminating the need for OWRD staff to track individual “colors” of water after diversion, HB 4006 allows state resources to be focused where they matter most. Streamlining administrative burdens benefits both the agency and water users, without compromising oversight.

At the same time, HB 4006 preserves a core principle that the Oregon Farm Bureau strongly supports: water rights remain property rights appurtenant to the land. This bill does not sever water rights from the land they are currently connected to, nor does it authorize water spreading or expansion of acreage beyond what is legally permitted. Landowners retain their underlying rights, and all existing priority and beneficial-use conditions remain intact.

Oregon has long relied on a balance between certainty and adaptability in managing shared natural resources. HB 4006 reflects that tradition. It protects the integrity of existing water rights, strengthens local collaboration, reduces administrative inefficiencies, and supports groundwater stability—all without expanding authorized use.

As we look to the future, forward-thinking, basin-level solutions will be essential to maintaining strong agricultural communities, healthy aquifers, and a resilient water supply for all Oregonians. HB 4006 is a practical step in that direction, and we respectfully urge your support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ryan J. Krabill', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Ryan J. Krabill
Oregon Farm Bureau