

Please consider this testimony in support of Oregon SB 404-2. I am a consultant and researcher in organic food and farming systems who has worked with organic farmers all over the State of Oregon. Organic agriculture helps promote healthy, prosperous, vibrant communities, and ensures that consumers have access to safe foods that reduce risks of exposure to pesticides and antibiotics. The demand for organic food continues to grow faster than the supply. While the market provides strong incentives, public support is needed to build capacity and overcome market failures and other obstacles to the adoption of organic practices. This includes research, education, extension, and technical assistance. SB 404-2 will help Oregon a leader in organic farming by doing the following:

1. It will increase funding for the Center for Small Farms and Community Food Systems at OSU Extension Services to hire a cluster of five Organic Specialists. These positions would provide technical assistance and research-oriented solutions to organic and conventional farmers who are interested in site-specific support for regenerative solutions and practices.
2. The bill would create two new positions at the Oregon Department of Agriculture—a Soil Health Specialist reflecting ODA's interest in supporting more climate-friendly agricultural practices for Oregon; and an Organic Policy Special Assistant to the Director to oversee increased marketing of organic products, facilitation of more national and international trade in Oregon's organic products, and coordination of ODA's activities across the agency in support of Oregon's organic sector.
3. The Oregon legislature would issue a directive to the Oregon Business Development Department to conduct a comprehensive economic analysis of Oregon's organic sector.
4. The bill includes a provision to ensure that organic products in Oregon are eligible for purchase by recipients of the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) public assistance program, making healthy organic food available to all.

Please vote "Yes" on SB 404-2 when it reaches the floor of the Senate.

Sincerely,
Brian Baker
Eugene, Oregon