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The Honorable Brad Witt  
Oregon House of Representatives  
900 Court St. NE, H-374  
Salem, OR 97301

Rep. Witt:

I'm writing to provide testimony in support of HB 2700, the bill to create a lending program for small and beginning farmers.

My husband and I bought seven acres north of Hood River in 2003 in hopes of raising a small crop in addition to our full-time jobs. During that time, we looked into the possibilities but were stymied by the lack of access to capital for equipment, irrigation, stock, and other infrastructure. We sold our land, defeated, in 2009. This experience is the basis for my book, *Get Your Pitchfork On!*, which I wrote as a cautionary tale for young, enthusiastic couples such as we.

While my husband and I were certainly guilty of not having done enough homework before we purchased the land, we were also doomed by the lending system. No one was interested in making a small loan or two to get our operation off the ground. We didn't have access to family money or other financing, and had to give up.

HB 2700 might have made all the difference to us had it been available in 2003. We could have bought a tractor and invested in an irrigation system that would have made a specialty crop, like asparagus, or a tourist destination, like a "u-pick" field, possible. Oregon supports one of the most vibrant small-farm climates in the United States; this bill will bolster that industry and keep small farms innovative and thriving.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Kristy Athens