



Testimony of Rebecca Landis, OFMA & CAFM
Feb. 5, 2014

Chair Burdick and members of the Senate Committee on Finance & Revenue:

I am testifying for SB 1541 on behalf of the Oregon Farmers' Markets Association, which represents 120+ farmers' markets and works on behalf of the small farmers who make our farmers' markets the envy of much of the nation. I also represent Corvallis-Albany Farmers' Markets.

I also run three farmers' markets in Corvallis and Albany. We have been hosting gleaners since the mid 1990s, and we partner in many other community food security initiatives aimed at increasing access to high-quality locally grown foods among low-income Oregonians.

Even though I work with farm direct marketers, I know that wholesale growers can get stuck with a crop at maturity that will not make it into its intended sales channel. Lopsided cannery contracts and fickle grocery buyers are but two of the stories I hear. Farmers sometimes have little recourse in these circumstances.

If a farmer has a crop that is uneconomic to harvest, let alone transport, food banks are much less likely to get that donation. The tax credit in SB 1541 can farmers with the costs of **turning a business loss into a gain for hungry Oregonians**. And indirectly, the credit could support extended employment for farm workers at the end of the crop cycle. Beyond labor, harvest costs include fuel for equipment and water and electricity to clean produce for donation.

We know that the emergency food system faces incredible demand (250,000 families seeking food boxes each month) and declining supply from commodity programs and the grocery supply chain. And if that were not enough reason to focus on farmer donations, it's also a clear opportunity to boost the health of low income Oregonians by getting more fresh fruits and vegetables into the donation stream.

Our food system is broken in many ways, and it cannot be fixed solely through the emergency food system. But we can be proud of the way Oregon Food Bank and its affiliates are working to improve the quality as well as the quantity of food available to those who seek help feeding their families.

Let's help our farmers and our food banks do more to get fresh, nutritious Oregon-grown foods into the hands of hungry and food-insecure families. Please send SB 1541 forward with a do pass recommendation.