



# POLK SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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March 31, 2017

Polk Soil and Water Conservation District  
580 Main Street, STE A  
Dallas, OR 97338

Representative Brian Clem, Chair  
House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources  
900 Court Street NE, Room 347  
Salem, Oregon 97301

### RE: Support for House Bill 3249

Dear Chair Clem and Committee Members,

The Polk Soil and Water Conservation District is writing to testify in support of HB 3249, known as the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program. The Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (OAHP) provides a new set of tools for landowners in Oregon to support working farms and ranches while also providing incentives and support for conservation benefits on those lands. Studies have consistently shown that farmers and ranchers prefer incentive based motivation to conserve and protect soil and water as opposed to what is perceived as overbearing regulatory technique and laws. Oregon continues to face pressure on its rural land from low-density development, fragmentation, population growth, succession challenges and other factors. In response, our organization, sees this program as providing critical voluntary tools to help Oregon's Soil and Water Conservation Districts and landowners meet Oregon's natural resource goals in a constructive, agreeable manner.

This program would fulfill a much-needed funding niche by providing grants to districts, land trusts and other eligible entities to protect agricultural land. Unlike our neighbors in Washington and California, Oregon lacks a farmland protection program that could leverage federal programs like the USDA Farm Bill's Agricultural Land Easement program.

The program would also assist landowners with succession planning, fund a study to determine implications of Oregon's tax structure on succession planning, and provide support for managing conservation values on private land through management plans.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify on HB 3249.

Sincerely,

Karin Stutzman  
District Manager  
Polk Soil and Water Conservation District