



Date: March 31, 2017

To: The Honorable Brian Clem, Chair
House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources

Testimony in Support of House Bill 3249

Greenbelt Land Trust supports House Bill 3249 and offers the following comments.

House Bill 3249 establishes the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Fund and programs supported by the fund to provide grants for:

- qualifying conservation management plans,
- working land conservation covenants, or
- working land conservation easements on agricultural lands.

The Bill also establishes the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Commission and provides direction to the Legislative Policy and Research Director to study the effect of financial incentives, tax reduction and elimination on transfers and succession planning for land used for agricultural production.

Oregon's diverse agricultural lands are a cornerstone of the state's economy and food security system with a rich legacy recognized and emboldened by the progressive and far-thinking state-wide land use system implemented by the legislature in 1973. Goal 3 of the Oregon's statewide land use program states that "agricultural lands shall be preserved and maintained..". However this remarkable agricultural legacy is in danger from changes in ownership and development pressures. Nearly 97% of Oregon's farms are family owned, but 75% of these farms are expected to change hands within the next 20 years. Few farming and ranching families have succession plans or the financial resources to allow for the properties to remain within the family or to be continued as a family farm. Passage of this Bill will be an essential step towards providing agricultural land owners with access to financial and tax incentives and technical assistance to ensure that their farms can keep operating now and for future generations. Additional benefits are the ability to match funding from the program with an extensive suite of other federal incentive opportunities such as the Agricultural Lands Easement program.

Greenbelt Land Trust appreciates the opportunity to provide these comments and encourages the members of the Committee to vote in favor of moving the Bill to the House for full consideration.

Contact:

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