



# Willamette Farm & Food Coalition

March 31, 2017

Representative Brian Clem, Chair  
House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee  
900 Court Street NE, H-478  
Salem, OR 97301

Re: HB 3249, Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program

Dear Chair Clem and Members of the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee:

On behalf of Willamette Farm and Food Coalition, I am writing in support of HB 3249, the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (OAHP).

Throughout our 16 years as a community-based nonprofit organization, Willamette Farm and Food Coalition has worked to strengthen our regional food system so that our farms and food businesses are both ecologically and economically viable, our agricultural lands are supporting our residents' food needs, and all members of our community have access to locally grown and raised foods. This vision, which we share with countless individuals and businesses throughout Oregon, relies on the availability and protection of our agricultural lands. Once lost to development and other uses, these lands—some of the richest in our country—are forever lost to agricultural production.

The OAHP provides a common sense approach to conservation, providing farmers and ranchers with voluntary conservation tools to preserve the lands that they have often dedicated their lives to for the purpose of feeding Oregonians and pursuing meaningful work. These conservation tools will facilitate deliberate and orderly plans for agricultural land succession and management, as well as technical assistance for landowners and their families.

In addition, establishment of the OAHP would enable Oregon to be eligible to receive funding from federal programs designed to encourage the conservation of agricultural lands, leveraging our collective investment in our agricultural future. Without a mechanism to provide a state-level match, Oregonians find themselves supporting the preservation of lands in other states while the lands in their own communities succumb to pressures from development and other uses.

For Oregon's economic, environmental and agricultural future, Willamette Farm and Food Coalition strongly supports establishment of the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program.

Sincerely,  
Karen Dunne, Executive Director