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SB 5524 TESTIMONY

WAYS AND MEANS EDUCATION SUB COMMITTEE
SENATOR ROD MONROE, CO-CHAIR
REPRESENTATIVE BARBARA SMITH WARNER, CO-CHAIR

April 17, 2017

Presented by
TAMI KERR, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Oregon Dairy Farmers Association

My name is Tami Kerr. I am the Executive Director of the Oregon Dairy Farmers Association headquartered in Salem. We represent the 228 dairy farms in Oregon.

In 2015, milk was the #4 agricultural commodity with an economic contribution of more than \$474 million dollars.

The Oregon Dairy Farmers Association and producers across the state depend heavily on the Extension staff at Oregon State University. Today's dairy farmers are facing unprecedented public scrutiny and assault from environmental and anti-livestock organizations. The best defense available is the science that the OSU team continually focuses on that informs our best management practices concerning air, water, nutrient management and herd health. These dedicated specialists work hard to educate our producers throughout the state.

In the 2015 Legislative Session, OSU received a \$14 million increase for their programs. The resulting funding enabled OSU to hire some 40 new research and extension positions to address significant challenges facing Oregon family farmers, low income families and Oregon's natural resources enterprises.

One of the positions filled was the Willamette Valley Dairy Specialist whose office is located in the Marion County Extension Office. This position had been vacant for nearly 15 years. Producers throughout the Willamette Valley are engaging this new Specialist and she is working on research in cow comfort and other projects. Previously we had just one full-time Dairy Specialist located in Tillamook.

The Governor's recommended budget will have the effect of eliminating nearly 70% of the increases the legislature approved last session. Because most of these funds are used to cover personnel costs, the primary tool the Statewides have to manage their costs during budget

reductions is through the elimination of positions. **It is critical to us that the recently filled Dairy Extension Specialist position be retained. We need more research and we need help as producers continue to implement best management practices.**

The investment in research and extension for Oregon State University and production agriculture is critical. The Oregon Dairy Farmers Association respectfully requests the Ways and Means Education Sub Committee restore the funds to the Statewides in SB 5524.

Thank you.