



Oregon Dairy Farmers Association
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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
CHAD ALLEN, PRESIDENT
Oregon Dairy Farmers Association

My name is Chad Allen. I currently serve as the President for the Oregon Dairy Farmers Association headquartered here in Salem, representing 228 Oregon Dairies statewide. These multi generational farm families deliver the highest quality milk to the market everyday **under strict state and federal regulations**. I am a dairy farmer from Tillamook County where I reside and farm with my family.

In 2015, the milk produced on Oregon's dairy farms resulted in an economic contribution of more than \$474 million dollars (farm gate value before processing). The number of Oregon Dairies is directly related to the ability of each farm to withstand milk market price fluctuation against the cost of feed, labor, taxes, equipment and the ever changing regulatory burden from the state and federal levels.

The Oregon Dairy Farmers Association and every dairy farmer in Oregon depend heavily on the excellent scientific and 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 on farm best management practices concerning air, water, nutrient management and herd health. These dedicated specialists work tirelessly to educate our dairy farmers in every county where dairies are present.

In the 2015 Legislative Session, OSU received a \$14 million increase for the broad spectrum of programs in their portfolio. The resulting \$118 million funding level enabled OSU to hire some 40 new research and extension positions across the state 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 ten years! Producers throughout the Willamette Valley are engaging this new Specialist and taking under advisement recommendations on current issues facing the dairy farmer.

The Governor's recommended budget will have the effect of eliminating nearly 70% of the programmatic 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 imperative the recently filled Dairy Extension Specialist position be retained for the dairy industry to effectively engage the public and activist groups on dairy farming practice.**

As a producer, I can attest that every new regulation, whether it is State or Federal, comes with a price. That price is our time, first and foremost. Many of us are struggling desperately to locate, hire and retain a reliable and dependable workforce. When we lack workers on our farms, we are forced to wear many hats. That means early morning and late afternoon shifts in the milking parlor, chores to keep the herd healthy, paperwork, interface with our processors for milk pickup, planting and harvesting the crops, discussions with our veterinarian (who are frequently shared with other farmers), caring for our families and our workers. Dairy demands that my work week is 24/7, 365 days a year. The limited time I am away from my farm directly correlates to if and whether I have reliable help on the farm. No other profession makes this type of demand on its practitioners. Thus, we are seeing family members declining accepting the obligations that come with saying "Yes" to joining the

management team and acquiring the farm. The next generation is seeking a “work, life balance” not unlike other college graduates.

If it is the desire of this Legislature to provide meaningful help to Oregon’s Dairy Farmers, we would urge your ongoing investment in research and extension for Oregon State University.

The Oregon Dairy Farmers Association respectfully urges the Ways and Means Education Sub Committee restore the funds to the Statewides in SB 5524.

Thank you for your time and attention.