



Farmers Advisory Committee of 1000 Friends of Oregon

133 SW 2rd Avenue, Suite 201 • Portland, OR 97204

To: Oregon State Legislature, House Committee on Agriculture and Land Use
From: Jim Gilbert, Chair of the 1000 Friends of Oregon Farmers Advisory Committee
Re: Strong support for HB 2729 and the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program
Date: February 11, 2019

Dear Chair Clem, Vice-Chairs McLain and Post, and members of the Committee,

The Farmers Advisory Committee of 1000 Friends of Oregon represents over 50 farmers, ranchers and foresters from all regions of the State. **We are writing to express our strong support for HB 2729.** Funding the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (OAHP) at \$10M for the 2019-2021 biennium will provide a critical set of tools to support farmers and ranchers in communities throughout Oregon.

As you know, OAHP was developed by a diverse coalition of stakeholders to protect Oregon's unique agricultural lands and the conservation benefits those lands provide. Many of these legacy lands are currently at risk to subdivision and conversion as 75% of Oregon's agricultural lands will change hands in the next 20 years. OAHP was codified by the legislature in 2017 with strong bipartisan support and became law, yet it lacks funding to implement the programs it was designed to deliver.

The creation of OAHP catalyzed a conversation in Oregon about the ways conservation and agriculture are not only compatible but also complementary – how our private working lands provide both the economic and ecological foundations for the state. Over the past year, the OAHP Commission, a group of leaders appointed by ODA, OWEB, ODFW, DLCD and OSU Extension, oversaw the program and finalized administrative rules. The 11 Commissioners make up a statewide leadership body that represents Oregon's farming, ranching, conservation and tribal communities. They collectively have volunteered hundreds of hours during the past year to attend monthly meetings and develop OAHP's administrative rules, which are ready to implement as soon as funding is secured.

As Oregon continues to face pressure on its productive agricultural land from low-density development, fragmentation, population growth, succession challenges and more, there is an urgent need for the voluntary tools that the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program is designed to provide. **We urge you to support the \$10 million funding request to implement the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program** and fund projects with the growing host of willing and interested landowners who want to protect their working lands for future generations.

Sincerely,
Jim Gilbert
Northwoods Nursery, Molalla
Chair, 1000 Friends Farmer Advisory