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March 14, 2019

Chair Clem
House Committee on Agriculture
Land Use
State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support for House Bills 3085, 3090 and 3091

Dear Chair Clem and Committee Members:

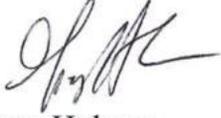
Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of the concepts included in House Bills 3085, 3090 and 3091. 1000 Friends of Oregon is a nonprofit, membership organization that has worked with Oregonians for more than 40 years to support livable urban and rural communities; protect family farms, forests and natural areas; and provide transportation and housing choices.

It is by now a well-known statistic that, because of the increasing average age of farmers, up to two-thirds of Oregon's farmland is expected to change hands in the coming decades. It is also well-documented that gaining access to the land and equipment necessary to farm is an increasingly expensive prospect for beginning farmers and ranchers. If agriculture is to remain one of the strongest and most diverse aspects of Oregon's economy, we must take steps now to ensure that as much of the land that changes hands as possible remains with people who want to farm it, and we need to ensure that Oregon's family farmers can succeed in their businesses.

House Bills 3085, 3090 and 3091 each contain concepts that can help ensure those outcomes. We supported the bill that originally created Beginning and Expanding Farmer Loan Program and, like other supporters, have been disappointed to see that this program, which has been hugely successful in other states, has seen little use here. We encourage you to use HB 3091 to remove barriers to its use. HB 3085 and 3090 would both create new programs that would help beginning farmers and existing family farmers. The concepts in both bills merit consideration. HB 3090, in particular, should be expanded beyond the current proposal to be available to all beginning farmers and ranchers.

Thank you for consideration of our comments and for your leadership in creating and strengthening programs to support Oregon's family farmers.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Greg Holmes', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Greg Holmes
Food Systems Program Director
1000 Friends of Oregon