

To: Oregon State Legislature, House Committee on Agriculture and Land Use
From: Lois Loop
Re: HB 2729 funding for the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program
Date March 25, 2019

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

As a member of the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Commission (Commission), I am writing to express my strong support for HB 2729. I was honored to be able to serve on this Commission after I spent 30 years working for the USDA/Farm Service Agency assisting in the administration of federal conservation programs on agricultural lands. This experience convinced me of several things. 1) Agriculture and Conservation needs can be very compatible and are absolutely necessary and 2) there is a critical need to see that our agriculture lands remain "working lands" and are not fragmented or converted. As a member of a 4th generation farm in the Willamette Valley I have witnessed the popup of non-agricultural uses on EFU lands regardless of our Oregon Land Use Laws of which we are so proud. This program (OAHP) would provide the encouragement needed for working farm families to get succession planning and provide a way of financing the conservation needs and a method of protecting the heritage of the farm. This includes the need to continue to produce the food and fiber needed for a growing population.

Funding the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (OAHP) at \$10M for the 2019-2021 biennium will provide a variety of voluntary tools to farmers and ranchers who want to protect their working lands for future generations of Oregonians.

Legislation authorizing the creation of the OAHP was signed into law by Governor Brown in September of 2017 after receiving strong bipartisan support in both the House and Senate. I was recommended by the Oregon Board of Agriculture and approved by OWEB's Board to represent the need for water quality on the Commission. Collectively, commissioners represent a diverse body of leaders from the agriculture and natural resource sectors in Oregon.

Since my appointment, I have spent hundreds of hours aiding in the development of administrative rules for OAHP. I am confident that these rules provide a clear and effective structure to provide public benefits to rural communities and the environment, thus accomplishing the Legislature's objectives. A funded OAHP will provide grants to preserve working lands that provide exceptional natural resources values, promote succession planning, and help landowner applicants tap into matching federal funds that Oregon continues to leave on the table without a state-level funding program.

It is truly urgent that the Legislature appropriate \$10M this session to get OAHP up and running. Continued pressure on our State's productive agricultural land

threatens to fragment working lands and leave us with a patchwork of low-density, unwise development. Oregon's family-owned farms and ranches face a critical turnover period in the coming years. By funding the OAHP, the Legislature can help stem the tide of land loss, protect the State's agricultural heritage, and secure natural resources co-benefits that align with state priorities.

I urge you to support HB 2729's \$10 million funding request to *implement the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program*. I am available and look forward to answering any questions that you may have about OAHP.

Sincerely,

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