



Oregon Association of
Conservation Districts

April 8, 2019

To: House Committee on Agriculture and Land Use
haglu.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov

From: The Oregon Association of Conservation Districts

Re: Strong Support for HB 3090, Supporting the Next Generation of Farmers

To Chair Clem, Vice Chairs McLain and Post, members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on HB 3090. I am testifying on behalf of the Oregon Association of Conservation Districts to express strong support for HB 3090, which establishes a beginning farmer and rancher incentive program. OACD serves and represents Oregon's 45 Soil and Water Conservation Districts, which are special districts governed by elected boards. The Districts protect and enhance soil quality, water quality and quantity, and habitat by supporting voluntary conservation in partnership with private landowners and managers as well as nonprofit, federal, and state partners like the Oregon Department of Agriculture. **HB 3090 would strengthen Oregon's ability to meet current and future needs for agricultural production by facilitating the entry of new farmers and ranchers into the industry.**

Agriculture is the 2nd largest economic driver in the state (\$8.2 billion annually), but the future of this crucial economic base faces significant challenges. Oregon's agricultural lands are shrinking and becoming more expensive. Since 1974, half a million acres of land has been taken out of production, 65,600 acres have been taken out of Exclusive Farm Use zoning, and fragmentation and development of agricultural lands continue to threaten the land needed for viable agricultural or ranching operations. The cost per acre of farmland increased from \$1,534 in 2002 to \$1,882 in 2012. The increasing cost of land, and other startup costs, are major reasons why many young or beginning farmers and ranchers struggle to get a start in the industry. **The average age of Oregon farmers is 60 years old, 10 years older than in 2002, and 2 years older than the national average.**

The Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) has recognized these challenges in their 2018-2023 Strategic Plan, which identifies "building a technical agricultural workforce" and "keeping the next generation of agriculture involved" as priorities. **The Beginning Farmer and Rancher Incentive Fund proposed in HB 3090 would provide ODA with the mechanism to meet their goals to assist the new generation of farmers and ranchers in Oregon.**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding HB 3090 and the importance of supporting beginning farmers and ranchers. **We encourage you to pass HB 3090 to support the next generation of stewards of our agricultural land and economy, which benefit all Oregonians.**

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anna Freitas". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Anna" and last name "Freitas" clearly distinguishable.

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