Dear Sen. Lew Frederick and Rep. Susan McLain,

My name is Parker Cooper and I am writing you to ask for your support to continue to fully fund the OSU Fermentation Science Program. This program of research, innovation, and education is incredibly valuable. It assists in creating jobs and furthering economic development statewide. It helps support Oregon business, and sets up students for successful careers in the fermentation and food production industry in Oregon. The OSU Fermentation Science program benefits all Oregonians.
The fermentation-based industries in Oregon continue to grow rapidly and have a significant economic impact. Oregon is a destination for travelers wanting to try world-class wines, beer, sake, cider, spirits and cheese. Tourism has a positive impact on the local economy, particularly in rural areas that are economically depressed.

The OSU fermentation science program prepares students to enter industry. I went to Oregon State as a post-baccalaureate and got my degree in Food Science with a concentration in fermentation science. Before going back to school, I was working a dead-end job selling cheese, where I would never make more than 15 dollars an hour. I got a job immediately after graduation from OSU, and within 2 years I was Quality Manager at Swan Island Dairy in Portland Oregon. I then was Quality Manager at Rogue Creamery, and now I am Quality Manager at Organic Milk Exchange. I have never had a hard time finding a job with my Food Science degree. I was able to go back to school because Oregon State had a program that was relevant to what I wanted to study, and I could afford in-state tuition. I can honestly say that going back to school changed my life for the better. I now have a job with benefits and upward mobility, but most importantly I know that what I do matters. I care about my work because I know that my product is in thousands of people's homes, and that I am responsible for that product to be safe.

Many of the workers in these industries, particularly the dairy industry, are older and are retiring. The workforce needs more young people to sustain these industries. The unique programs offered in the OSU Fermentation science program prepare young people to enter the workforce and hit the ground running. It is incredibly difficult to find people who are qualified for these jobs, and OSU graduates are highly sought after.

Not only does OSU prepare people with real-world skills to enter the workforce, but they support them after graduation. Countless times I have emailed Dr. Goddik asking for her help to troubleshoot issues. Her assistance has saved the businesses I have worked for untold amounts of money by improving our products and reducing loss due to bad quality. When you work for a small producer, losing just one lot of product can be the difference between being able to make payroll for your employees. I cannot convey how much the support of the OSU Fermentation Science program is

worth for Oregon producers, both big and small. Without the OSU Fermentation Science program, producers would not have access to the support and research that is given to Oregon producers.

With the implementation of the Food Safety Modernization Act, many producers have been overwhelmed with trying to find scientific evidence that their preventive controls adequately control food safety hazards in their product. This is one area where I have directly benefitted from the support of the Fermentation Science program at OSU. Without their assistance, many producers would lose the essential support which allows them to produce safe, quality products that we are so proud of in Oregon.

The research and development performed in the OSU Fermentation Science program is essential for the success of Oregon fermentation based industry. One example is research that was done on raw milk hauling practices. They found that additional washing of milk trucks did not have an effect of the quality of milk, this means that producers can save time, chemicals, and labor by washing milk hauling trucks as often as they need, and not more often. This creates less waste from cleaning solution, producers are using less chemicals to clean, and they save money both on labor and chemical/water costs.

In order to keep growing and expanding Oregon's fermentation-based industry, we need to continued research and development. This includes exciting prospects such as taking waste whey, from making cheese, and turning it into spirits. Whey is a huge issue for cheesemakers. Only very large operations have the capability to dry whey into whey powder, the only options available to smaller producers are either putting it down the drain or feeding it to pigs. If smaller producers were able to sell a waste product, it would be a way to save money and be better to the environment.

Oregon is known for its specialty beer, wine, spirits, and cheese. Without the support of the Fermentation Science program at Oregon State University, these industries would suffer. They would not have a place to go to ask questions, they would not have graduates to employ, they would not have the essential research and innovation that is necessary to stay competitive. I hope that you continue to fully fund the Fermentation Science Program at Oregon State University. Thank you for the opportunity to tell you of my experiences with this program.

Sincerely,

Parker Cooper