

HB 2729 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Agriculture and Land Use

Action Date: 03/26/19

Action: Do pass and be referred to Ways and Means by prior reference

Vote: 5-0-2-0

Yeas: 5 - Boshart Davis, Helm, McLain, Smith DB, Williams

Exc: 2 - Clem, Post

Fiscal: Fiscal impact issued

Revenue: No revenue impact

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Meeting Dates: 2/12, 3/26

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Appropriates \$738,652 from the General Fund to the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) for the purposes of hiring personnel and contracting for services to carry out the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program. Appropriates \$9,250,000 from the General Fund to OWEB to be deposited in the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Fund for program grants. Declares emergency, and takes effect July 1, 2019.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program
- Generational transfer of intact farmlands
- Succession planning challenges
- Potential consequences of alternative uses for, or division of, farmland
- Investment in tools to address identified risks

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

The Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (OAHP) was established by the legislature in 2017 to help Oregon farmers and ranchers plan for succession and maintain agricultural land for future generations. Since passage, the 12-member Oregon Agricultural Heritage Commission has been established, addressed initial implementation logistics, and completed program rulemaking. ORS 541.977-541.989 directs the OAHP to provide grants for conservation management plans, working land conservation covenants and easements, technical assistance, and succession planning. However, no funding for program implementation was provided by the legislature in 2017.

House Bill 2729 would appropriate \$9,988,652 from the General Fund to the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board to hire Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program personnel, contract for services, and provide grants to farmers and ranchers.