

Chair Clem and committee members, my name is Dr. Jeffrey Steiner and I am Associate Director of the Global Hemp Innovation Center at Oregon State University. I have prepared remarks on HB 4051 that stress the importance of establishing a statewide hemp commodity commission.

HB 4051 establishes the Oregon Hemp Commission to enable the hemp industry to continue to develop, maintain its competitive position, and expand markets for hemp and hemp products through the conduct of research, education, and information programs. Such efforts could support the wide range of industry sector participants, a majority of whom are hemp farmers. The Oregon Agricultural Experiment Station and Extension Service at Oregon State University would be seen as partners to this new commission.

A hemp commission would play a vital role in identifying the most pressing challenges faced by this new industry in the different production regions around the state. A commission could help prioritize research initiatives to find solutions that increase crop productivity and profitability, and foster the use of sustainable agricultural practices. Examples of pressing issues could be hemp coexistence with other crops, effective management of insects and diseases, and prevention of soil erosion and escape of nutrients from fields that affect water quality. A hemp commission could also oversee the research into the development of new varieties for use in Oregon and around the world, creating new processes and products for hemp, and supporting trade and marketing activities.

Commodity commissions are a proven model for advancing the competitiveness of the state's agricultural commodities. Oregon State University already partners with other Oregon commodity commissions that support traditional and specialty crops and other high-value products produced and marketed in the state. Establishment of an Oregon Hemp Commission would help do the same for hemp.

From the perspective of the Global Hemp Innovation Center at Oregon State University, we understand how Oregon's unique geographic location makes it the most productive hemp producing region in the world. Through support from a hemp commission, the world-class scientists at Oregon State and other universities in the state could be leveraged to find solutions to the challenges the hemp industry faces, and create the innovations and solutions that are needed to advance all aspects of this emergent industry. Doing so is important to maintain Oregon's position as a national and world leader for hemp research and production.

Chair Clem and committee members, thank you for this opportunity to speak with you on this bill today.