

Chair Senator Dembrow, Vice-Chair Senator Thomsen and Members of the Senate Committee on Education,

I am writing in support of SB 404-2. I am a farmer with Two Rivers Farm.

SB 404-2, will provide targeted investments to assist Oregon farmers interested in transitioning to organic practices. It will also create a new Soil Health Specialist position Oregon Department of Agriculture, providing in-house expertise at ODA to improve soil health on Oregon's agricultural lands. Healthy soils practices are aligned with organic practices and provide a variety of benefits that are important to farmers and ranchers. In addition to increasing productivity, water retention and pest and disease prevention, healthy soil practices can also sequester carbon in the soil and depending on the practices, can reduce farmers' energy use and reduce fertilizer- related greenhouse gas emissions. They also help farmers and ranchers stay resilient in the face of changing and unpredictable climate conditions.

Among other things, this new Soil Health position at ODA would support the implementation of ODA's climate change plan which is aligned with the new Oregon Climate Action Plan.

In the face of a changing climate and the many benefits of soil health practices for Oregon producers, this position is needed now more than ever!

Thank you for your consideration and your service.

Keegan Caughlin