

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

I am writing with strong support for SB 404-2. I am Dr. Ray Seidler, a steering committee member with Cultivate Oregon. SB 404-2, will provide targeted investments to assist Oregon farmers interested in transitioning to organic practices. It will also create a much needed and indeed much past due 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 many agronomic benefits that are important to farmers and ranchers. In addition to increasing productivity, water retention, reduced soil erosion, and pest and disease prevention, and physical/biological properties, healthy soil practices can also sequester carbon in the soil and depending on the practices, can reduce farmers' energy use, reduce fertilizer and reduce net emissions of greenhouse gas. Healthy soils also help farmers and ranchers stay resilient in the face of changing and unpredictable climate conditions that include a reduction in available irrigation water and much more.

Among other things, this new Soil Health position at ODA would support 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! The two other west coast states have already implemented such healthy soil programs and passage of SB404 as amended in Oregon would represent a "catching up" to needed realities of our time.

Thank you for your consideration and your service.

Dr. Ray Seidler,  
Ashland, Oregon