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Oregon Farm Bureau Supports SB 541
Senate Committee on Energy and Environment
March 30, 2021

Chair Beyer and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on SB 541. The Oregon Farm Bureau has been engaged our state's conversations around carbon policy for the past decade and have been strong proponents for recognizing and crediting the role our state's working lands play in carbon sequestration. We know that Oregon's working farm and forest lands provide extraordinary carbon sequestration benefits for all Oregonians, and we strongly support SB 541's directive that the state consider the benefits of those lands in determining Oregon's progress toward meeting our carbon sequestration goals.

By way of background, OFB is Oregon's largest grassroots agriculture association, representing nearly 7,000 farming and ranching families across the state. Our mission is to promote educational improvement, economic opportunity, and social advancement for our members and the farming, ranching, and natural resources industry as a whole.

America's farmers and ranchers play a leading role in promoting soil health, conserving water, enhancing wildlife, efficiently using nutrients, and caring for their animals. For decades they have embraced innovation thanks to investments in agricultural research and adopted climate-smart practices to improve productivity, enhance sustainability, and provide clean and renewable energy.

Livestock and crop production are the heart of American agriculture, providing the food we enjoy every day. The daily choices we make on our farm and ranches are driven by our commitment to sustainability. Farmers have embraced technologies that reduce emissions and increase efficiency, making U.S. agriculture a leader in sustainability. All told, agriculture accounts for approximately 10% of total U.S. greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, far less than transportation, electricity generation, and industry sectors. Farmers continue to produce more with greater efficiency. In fact, U.S. agriculture would have needed nearly 100 million more acres in 1990 to match 2018 production levels.

Nationwide, carbon sequestration, achieved through the management of cropland, rangeland, forestry, and wetlands contributed to GHG removals equivalent to 12% of total U.S. emissions. We believe that data will show that Oregon's working lands provide significant carbon sequestration, particularly when compared to our state's relatively low emissions when compared to nationwide statistics. With increased investment in agricultural research we can develop the new frontier technologies to capture even more carbon in our croplands, our forests and our rangeland. With cutting-edge science, we may be able to achieve net zero emissions in some sectors of agriculture.

U.S. farmers and ranchers have long been at the forefront of climate-smart farming, utilizing scientific solutions, technology, and innovations to raise crops and care for livestock. These efforts are designed to protect soil and water, efficiently manage manure, produce clean and renewable energy, capture carbon, and improve sustainability. Over two generations, we've been able to increase productivity by 287 percent, while using the same resources. To say we're doing more with less is an understatement. American farmers and ranchers are pioneers of sustainability, and any policy debate should recognize their contributions, efficiency gains, and the considerable impact of their carbon sequestration efforts. We believe that SB 541 will help achieve this goal.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 541. Please contact me if you have any questions.

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