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April 14, 2021

State of Oregon  
Joint Committee on Ways and Means - Co-Chairs:  
Representative Dan Rayfield;  
Senator Betsy Johnson; and,  
Senator Elizabeth Steiner Hayward.

**RE: Testimony – Senate Bill 404-3** instructs Oregon State University Extension Service to establish certain new positions related to organic production and maintain certain existing position related to organic production.

**Government Unit(s) Affected:**

Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC), Oregon Business Development Department (OBDD), Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA),

Dear Committee Chairs and members,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Steve Pierson and with my family we run a 350-cow organic dairy farm near St. Paul, Oregon.

I also serve as one of the 7 board members for the national cooperative, Organic Valley.

Our cooperative sources milk from 33 organic dairy farms in Oregon and over 1,600 nationwide. Organic Valley owns and operates a dairy processing facility in McMinnville, Oregon. We purchased the creamery in 2016 and it now employs 50 people.

McMinnville Creamery is a testament to our commitment to the Pacific Northwest and confidence in the organic marketplace.

Myself and our cooperative are eager to express support for Senate Bill 404-3.

This legislation positions Oregon to be a premier leader on organic agriculture and can help leverage market opportunity for farmers and businesses.

I say that because trend lines show the organic food consumer purchases continues to be strong with 5% growth year over year. <sup>1</sup>

Within SB 404-3 there is investments to: expand organic specialists at Oregon State University; strengthen the capacity at the Department of Agriculture, and resources to conduct an economic analysis.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2020/06/09/2045936/0/en/COVID-19-will-shape-organic-industry-in-2020-after-banner-year-in-2019.html>



Let me share a prime example of what this legislation could enable.

We are seeing growing seasons that are longer, dryer and warmer as the norm. We will need to readapted farming practices to an evolving natural environment.

In dairy we use a large amount of feedstuffs to sustain all the animals on the farm. And while we have a favorable climate for grazing cattle, which is required in the organic standards, we cannot graze cattle all year.

I know of Oregon farmers in our co-op that source hundreds of tons of feedstuffs from the Midwest other regions of the U.S. It is millions of dollars leaving the state but needed for this value-added agriculture good we create --- organic milk.

Building the capacity to grown more organic feedstuffs in the region would have high worth for dairy farmers and crop producers. A land grant specialist focused on growing organic feedstuffs in the state is just what OSU could do with the foundation offered in this legislation.

The core of this legislation is two-fold:

- To fortify the knowledge that can help farmers integrate organics into their farms, or if they are certified organic already, become better at their trade;
- Secondly, it can expand market channels for Oregon organic commodities and goods.

I believe there is a case for stacked benefits from organic agriculture, but it is not my primary motivation in testifying for this legislation. My interest is seeing more economic opportunities for farm families and rural communities.

While I recognize the committee is balancing the needs of the entire state, I urge you to have confidence and commitment to agriculture by making these smart investments that positions our state to lead and thrive.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Stephen R. Pierson'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Steve Pierson  
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