



Senator Betsy Johnson
Senator Elizabeth Steiner Hayward
Representative Dan Rayfield
Tri-Chairs, Joint Ways & Means Committee

RE: OSU Statewide Public Service Programs

Dear Senators Johnson and Steiner Hayward and Representative Rayfield,

My name is T.J. Hafner. I work for a blueberry producer here in the Willamette Valley. I am an Oregon Blueberry Commissioner and also a member of the North Willamette Research and Extension Center Advisory Council. The purpose of this letter is to share with you why the Oregon State University Statewide Public Service Programs are so important to the state of Oregon.

The North Willamette Research and Extension Center (NWREC) is one of the agriculture experiment stations funded by these dollars. The research conducted at this facility has been very impactful for Oregon farming operations. Over the last 15 years global demand for blueberries has steadily rose. As demand increased so did production from other US regions, and other countries. This increase in production has outpaced demand at times and there have been challenging years financially for Oregon blueberry farmers as input costs continue to increase and pricing has dropped.

The research and extension done by NWREC staff has helped our business continue to be successful. Bernadine Strik's organic blueberry production research has paved the way for many conventional growers to transition from conventional to organic (at times more profitable) by demonstrating how to reduce labor costs and maximize production in an organic production system. Wei Yang's research has contributed to grower success at machine harvesting for the fresh market as labor resources have become much less reliable. The IR-4 program, now led by Dani Lightle, has been critical for many specialty crops (including blueberries) as new pest problems emerge, such as, Spotted Wing Drosophila.

In addition, these statewide programs have been critical for communities and farming operations to navigate the many challenges of 2020. They provided COVID-19 education and outreach for all residents, particularly those in traditionally harder-to-reach communities. They collaborated with the Oregon Army National Guard and Oregon Department of Agriculture to distribute face masks and hand sanitizer to agricultural workers throughout the state. During the Labor Day fires, Extension employees and volunteers, especially in our 4-H program, worked day and night rescuing livestock, then caring for the animals at more than a dozen county fairgrounds. At NWREC, we served as the Willamette Valley's regional hay donation and distribution site for farmers and

rural owners needing this emergency supply. And, new Extension Fire Programs presented post-fire webinars that have drawn hundreds of attendees over the past several months

The Governor's Recommended Budget flat-lined the Statewide's funding. I am asking that you support \$158.5 million in operational funding for the OSU Statewides - \$84 million for Agricultural Experiment Station, \$61.9 million for the OSU Extension Service and \$12.6 million for the Forest Research Laboratory. This investment represents a 7.42% base funding level increase to the 2019-21 budget—just to keep our programs intact so the OSU Statewides can continue their essential work in Oregon. With more than 30 programmatic faculty vacancies currently in our programs statewide, any further reductions in funding will have an even more critical impact on these important University research, education and outreach programs that truly serve **ALL Oregonians!**

I acknowledge the unique state of Oregon's economy and recognize the difficult decisions you will have to make in the weeks ahead. As a critical part of OSU's Land Grant mission to serve all corners of the state, I see this as a time to invest in programs, like the OSU Statewides, that have such a significant statewide impact.

Thank you for your consideration,
T.J. Hafner