

SB 5528  
Testimony in Support  
Helle Ruddenklau  
Ruddenklau Farms

Chair Frederick, Chair McLain, members of the committee,

My name is Helle Ruddenklau. I'm a farmer from Amity and Past President of Oregon Women for Agriculture and I'm here today to urge your support for Senate Bill 5528.

As a farmer I rely on the unbiased, scientific research coming out of OSU. Just yesterday, I received a Mid-Valley extension newsletter with up-to-date information relevant to our farm. One issue covered was the need for irrigation due to the very dry spring we have had. Thanks to research done by OSU we know exactly how much water is needed to reach the full potential of our crops. Having data to guide our irrigation management means we use our scarce water resources to maximize yields without wasting water. This is not work that would be done without OSU. It sells no fertilizer or chemicals so our ag supply companies are unlikely to invest in that kind of research. The precise and judicious use of water for agriculture is a benefit to Oregon as a whole.

Last year we entered one of our wheat fields into the National Wheat Yield Competition – and it won for the highest dryland winter wheat yield in the whole country. Wheat is an important crop grown throughout the state and the largest export out of the Port of Portland. Wheat helps Oregon compete on the global market. But the way we grow wheat in the Willamette Valley with 50 – 60 inches of rainfall a year, is not the same way a farmer grows wheat in Moro where they only get 10 inches per year. It is therefore crucial to have experiment stations and scientists based throughout the state, so they can advise farmers based on locally generated data.

The Statewides are embedded in the communities they serve, they are the local boots on the ground for OSU serving all of Oregon. When Covid hit last spring, the call went out that N95 masks were in critical need at local hospitals. All farmers I know, took their own supplies of masks and donated them to local health care workers. However, that left us without any for later in the season. We were unable to secure our own, but thankfully, supplies of masks and hand sanitizer were later distributed through the local extension offices. With a presence in each county they were a natural distribution point for efficiently getting resources out to local farmers. I was so grateful to have that supply as we had a crew pulling weeds in one of our fields the day the smoke from the wildfires settled in over the Willamette Valley. Having those masks on hand to give to the crew was invaluable.

These are just a few examples of the ways our everyday lives are intertwined with the services provided by the Statewides and how they help us be good members of our communities and careful stewards of Oregon's environment.