

Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire Recovery

SB1532

February 8, 2022

Dear Chair Golden, Vice Chair Kennemer, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Narendra Varma and I am the founder of Our Table Cooperative Farm located in Sherwood about 15 miles South of Portland. We grow organic berries and organic mixed vegetables on 60 acres with annual revenues of about \$450,000. Blueberries represent our single largest crop with about \$150,000 in annual revenues. We are organized as a cooperative and are owned by our workers and our community.

I would like to express support for **SB1532** because:

- There is an urgent need for additional extension agents focused on organic practices.
- Farmers like us are facing extreme weather and numerous other challenges. For example:
 - During last year's heat dome we lost over 50% of our blueberry crop which posed an existential threat to our business.
 - Reports from the Oregon Blueberry Commission suggest that we were one of the "lucky" ones - other farms reported 90%+ losses of various berry crops.
- I believe our organic practices (focusing on increasing soil organic matter which in turn results in massive increases in the soil's water holding capacity), helped limit our losses.
- I believe organic practices can help all farmers and rural communities by:
 - Working with nature to improve soil quality and watershed health thereby greatly increasing the resilience of our farms (and farmers) to future weather-related disasters.
 - Invite a broader coalition of people in the community to be invested in the success of Oregon's farms.
 - Help improve our crops and farming methods in ways that result in higher farm income while leaving a strong legacy of healthy soil and landscapes for future generations.

Thank you,

- Narendra Varma
Our Table Cooperative
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