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House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Chair Helm, Vice-Chairs Hartman and Owens and members of the Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water:

I am writing on behalf of the Union Soil & Water Conservation District and Board of Directors in strong support of HB 2998, the Healthy Soils Bill which would leverage existing programs and expand resources to support the agriculture community in applying soil health practices.

The Union SWCD is an active conservation partner with farmers and ranchers in Union County. We collaborate with and assist farmers and ranchers interested in implementing soil health practices such as planting cover crops, maintaining root biomass, and protecting soil structure. Managing for soil health allows producers to work with the land to reduce erosion, maximize water infiltration, improve nutrient cycling, save money on inputs, and ultimately improve the resiliency of their working land. These soil health actions we promote are consistent with the intent of HB 2998 and the Oregon Soil Health Initiative.

Farmers and ranchers implementing healthy soils practices have seen increased yields and decreased costs, and they want to do more. We need additional capacity to provide technical assistance and resources to meet their requests. This bill provides grant funding opportunities for that assistance and additional resources to support, coordinate, and share the work that many farmers and ranchers are doing to advance soil health. It will also position conservation groups across Oregon to leverage federal funding to take this work even further.

We respectfully request support for HB 2998 and thank you for your consideration and service.

Respectfully,

James Webster
District Manager, Union SWCD