

Members of the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, and Natural Resources and Water:

Chairman Helm:

I write to enthusiastically support HB Bill 2998, the Healthy Soils Bill

I am a retired environmental microbiologist (previously Prof. Microbiology Oregon State University then senior research scientist US EPA). For the last 6 years I have worked with several nonprofit organizations, to educate, promote, and encourage farmers and foresters, agencies, and the public to consider healthy soil practices. I write this letter as a technical advisor to non-profits Southern Oregon Climate Action Now (SOCAN), Our Family Farms, Cultivate Oregon, The Oregon Grange, and the Oregon Association of Conservation Districts. This letter is written to support the positions of these nonprofits. I also write as a rural Oregonian, living on 5 acres of land fed by a well. My wife and I own a boutique lavender farm where we practice healthy soil management. There is no external commercial fertilizer nor toxic commercial pesticides ever used on this crop. **The Healthy Soils Bill** (HB 2988) would establish the Oregon Soil Health Initiative to improve soil health on Oregon's farms and ranches by advancing key voluntary strategies that include financial incentives, technical assistance, farmer-to-farmer education, research, and other resources.

Why does Oregon need a Healthy Soils Bill? It is a proven scientific fact that healthy soils bring numerous agronomic benefits to natural and working lands and to their owners. These benefits include a significant cost savings in use of fuel. For example, on average, farmers practicing continuous conventional till use just over six gallons of diesel fuel per acre each year. Continuous no-till requires less than two gallons per acre. Across the country, that difference leads to nearly 282 million gallons of diesel fuel saved annually by farmers who practice continuous no-till instead of continuous conventional till. At some \$4.50 cost per gallon of fuel, a 100 acre field saves some \$1,800!

<https://www.usda.gov/media/blog/2017/11/30/saving-money-time-and-soil-economics-no-till-farming>

According to calculations by extension scientists at Ohio State University, significant additional cost benefits accrue with healthy soil management due to savings in lower fertilizer use that can easily add up to some \$100 per acre per year!

Healthy soils legislation at the State levels is not new to the U.S. There are some 29 States with passed or pending legislation, including 10 that have already passed legislation.

<https://policy.soil4climate.org/> The states with such programs reflect truly bipartisan support and range from California to Massachusetts to Nebraska, Oklahoma, Utah, New Mexico, etc.

It is truly time for Oregon to pass and encourage working land owners to adopt healthy soil practices and save money!

Thanks for reading my comments.

Sincerely,

**Ray Seidler, Ph.D.
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