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14 February, 2023

Chair Helm and Members
House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use,
Natural Resources, and Water
State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support for HB 2998 (Healthy Soils Bill)

Dear Chair Helm and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2998. 1000 Friends of Oregon is a nonprofit, membership organization that has worked with Oregonians for more than 45 years to support livable urban and rural communities; protect family farms, forests and natural areas; and provide transportation and housing choices.

As is pointed out in the testimony of others, healthy soils are the foundation for productive farms, for financially sustainable farm businesses, and for resilience from drought and natural disasters. HB 2998 would streamline, leverage and expand existing programs and resources to provide voluntary, incentive-based support for Oregon farmers. Strategies of the Initiative include: financial incentives, technical assistance, outreach and education, research, and other resources.

The soil health program created would also coordinate and streamline the efforts of multiple entities and agencies that already provide some of these services, including ODA, OWEB, OSU and Soil and Water Conservation Districts. Such coordination can only make these efforts more efficient. It is telling that so many Soil and Water Conservation Districts have submitted testimony in favor of this bill.

We urge you to support HB 2998. Thank you for consideration of our comments.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Greg Holmes".

Greg Holmes
Food Systems Program Director
1000 Friends of Oregon