

Submitter: Pam Keller

On Behalf Of: Oregon Society of Soil Scientists

Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

Measure: HB2998

Testimony in Support of House Bill 2998, the Healthy Soils Bill

House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water, 2/16/23

Chair Helm, Vice-Chairs Hartman and Owens and members of the Committee:

My name is Pam Keller and I represent The Oregon Society of Soil Scientists which has formally endorsed House Bill 2998.

OSSS is a 501c3 organization of professional soil scientists, students, and others with an interest in soils. Our primary goal is to promoting soil science education and research. Every year since the 1970's we sponsor two events in different parts of Oregon, learning about the soils from local experts and seeing them first hand.

I obtained a soil science degree in 1979 from Oregon State University and have worked in and studied soils ever since. I grew up in Corvallis, lived 25 years in Burns, and moved after retirement to the country between Lebanon and Sweet Home.

Oregon has over 2000 basic soil types (a tenth of the total for the U.S.) with a huge range of characteristics making it important to have site specific soils input from local area experts. One reason we support HB 2998 is the focus on local collaboration to develop a shared understanding of healthy soil practices and goals along with the need for research specific to Oregon regions.

We also like the emphasis on coordination between Oregon Dept. of Agriculture, Soil & Water Conservation Districts, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board and OSU Extension to streamline and avoid duplication of efforts.

There are proven economic benefits from precision fertilizer application, increasing soil carbon, and maintaining good soil structure and microbiome, but initial changes to soil management can be expensive. This bill recognizes the need for education, incentives, and technical assistance for the voluntary adoption of new or expanded healthy soil practices.

OSSS supports the research goals of HB 2998 and the initiation of a database for tracking soil health parameters over time including technical and monetary assistance for soil sampling. The initiative combines local knowledge and experience with the best current and emerging soil science.

These are all good strategies for advancing soil health in Oregon, and are areas where resources have been lacking and are needed. The Oregon Society of Soil Scientists urges your support for HB 2998. Thank you for your time.

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