

Submitter: Kate Perle

On Behalf  
Of:

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

Measure: HB2998

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

February 16, 2023

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

I am writing in strong support of HB 2998, the Healthy Soils Bill which would leverage  
existing programs and expand resources to support farmers and ranchers with soil  
health practices that make the most sense for their land and businesses.

I have been farming in the Willamette Valley for 27 years. I produce all manner of  
fruits, vegetables, dairy, beef, eggs as well as flowers and plant starts. I am proud to  
be one of over 50 farmers and ranchers across Oregon urging your support for the  
Healthy Soils Bill.

I practice organic and biodynamic agriculture, use minimal tillage and maximal  
handwork, and create all my farm fertility on site using cover crops, farm produced  
manure and composting practices to meet the needs of my commercial business. I  
farm proximate to a waterway and am exceedingly conscious of the effects of my  
work on the greater environs. My practices have created soils that are continually  
improving in organic matter composition, water retention, and soil tilth. These are the  
building blocks to a long future of productivity and resilience in the face of continuing  
climate extremes. I love to do all this, but am a small producer, unable to afford  
newer machinery that would improve my outcomes and reduce my carbon footprint.  
Opportunities to collectively purchase items that could benefit all the farmers in my  
area would be fantastic. Trainings on climate resilient cover crops, seed varieties to  
withstand our intense droughts, help with financing updated irrigation systems that  
use water more sparingly would help us evolve alongside our changing climate and  
allow us all to thrive.

The Soil Health Initiative will provide farmer to farmer education, equipment and  
financial incentives to farmers and ranchers who want to improve their soil health and  
are seeking support.

The Healthy Soils Bill provides capacity for existing trusted farm service providers

and creates a streamlined process for producers to access the support they want. I choose to farm with soil health at the center of all my decisions knowing that healthy soils create healthy and resilient plants. The fringe benefits of this approach are better water infiltration and storage capacity, minimized runoff and soil loss, improved nutrient cycling and in the end a more resilient and cost effective agriculture. I try to treat the soil like I want to maintain our relationship for the next 100 years. That approach is not without its challenges and is the direction all agriculture needs to go if we will survive as a species. The days of throwing money at fossil fuel and using soil faster than we can build it are over. Soil is our bank account and we need to start depositing if we will be able to feed the next generation.

Improving soil health provides environmental benefits that serve the whole community, including improved water quality, increased biodiversity and pollinator habitat, and sequestered carbon.

The Healthy Soils Bill will support, coordinate, and celebrate the work that many farmers and ranchers are doing to advance soil health. It will also position Oregon to receive federal funding to take this work even further.

Please support and do all you can to advance HB 2998.

Thank you for your consideration and your service.

Kate Perle  
Small is Beautiful  
Eugene, OR