



March 16, 2023

Re: Support SB 995, Suicide Prevention for Ag Workers

Chair Prozanski and members of the committee:

On behalf of the Eastern Oregon Coordinated Care Organization (EOCCO), I urge you to support SB 955, which will help prevent suicide among agriculture workers. EOCCO serves members in the following counties in Eastern Oregon: Baker, Gilliam, Grant, Harney, Lake, Malheur, Morrow, Sherman, Umatilla, Union, Wallowa, and Wheeler. EOCCO's providers and hospital systems deliver quality care for OHP members living in the EOCCO service area.

As you know, this bill would allocate critical funding for and establish a crisis hotline focused on reducing suicide among agriculture workers through Oregon State University's Extension Services. Oregon's suicide rates remain higher than the national average, while nationwide suicide rates among farmers, ranchers and other agricultural managers are nearly 58% higher than any other industry.

Because we represent most of Eastern Oregon's farming and ranching communities, many of our members are included in the agriculture industry, and mental health remains a challenge in many of the communities we serve. This bill will be incredibly impactful for our membership in the eastern part of the state, providing resources and access to trained specialists who understand the needs of this unique community.

In addition to the hotline, this bill will fund valuable education and outreach activities through OSU Extension Service to reach those who need this support the most.

We urge you to support this critical funding and support Oregon's agriculture workers and managers and vote yes on SB 955.

Thank you for your consideration,

Montana Lewellen