

Chair Helm, Vice-chairs Hartman and Owens, and members of the committee:

For the record, my name is Janel Lajoie, and I am the Philomath, Oregon Farmers' Market Manager. I am grateful for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 3124 and especially on the importance of components 4-7 and 4-8.

Components 4-7 and 4-8 provide support to small farmers and the community food system in the face of the ongoing drought and related natural disasters and extreme weather events. It is extremely important for the state to prioritize these community assets when thinking about drought resilience and planning for Oregon's changing water reality. Component 4-7 creates a separate fund for small farmers to gain drought resilience through the Oregon Community Food Systems Network. The OCFSN has proven its ability to run this kind of program and its members are trusted resources for new, small, and diverse farmers that do not traditionally take advantage of ODA programs. This is distinct from the ODA drought relief and resilience fund because:

- The OCFSN fund prioritized BIPOC farmers and was only open to small farms with under \$300,000 of revenue
- The OCFSN funds are grants, which are more accessible to small farms than the forgivable loans in the ODAP program.
- OCFSN is using a network of trusted organizations to reach farmers who do not see themselves in or have good relationships with ODA programs.
- OCFSN's application process was less burdensome paperwork wise and involved more one on one attention from the grant administrator, so it was open to more new and first time farmers.

Component 4-8 creates resilience for our community food system sales outlets which will allow them to keep benefiting farmers and feeding communities even in the face of drought related disasters. We need to prioritize our community food systems because:

- Farmers markets are essential businesses and in times of crisis (like pandemics) when the centralized food system fails they provide safe, reliable access to crucial, nutritionally dense food for our communities.
- Farmers markets have millions of visitors and generate an estimated \$60M of sales each year according to OFMA's data.
- Food Hubs and farmers markets can serve as business incubators for small and new farms to help them reach new customers, establish their brand, and grow into reliable sources of local food for their communities.
- Local and community food systems are good for rural economies. Encouraging this type of farming and these outlets supports the farms that, according to a study from OSU, create more jobs per \$1M in sales, put more money directly into the local economy, and generate more economic activity for other local businesses than commodity farms.

As a farmer's market manager, this is personally meaningful to me because the market I manage lost days and revenue from closures related to extreme weather events. We have closed because temperatures were well over 100° F, and we have had multiple vendors cancel due to extreme heat or heavy downpours.

It is a good investment to prioritize community food systems and make Oregon more resilient. Please support HB 3124 and prioritize components 4-7 and 4-8.

Sincerely,

Janel L. Lajoie
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Philomath Farmers' Market
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