

Submitter: chris rusch
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure: SB5506

Senator Steiner, representative Sanchez and ways and means committee members.
Good evening, my name is Chris Rusch.

I am here to support SB 458, full funding for the OSU Statewides, including OSU Extension.

I garden in Tiller Oregon, a small rural community in the foothills of Southeast Douglas County where I have lived all of my adult life.

I am the president of the Oregon Master Gardener Association

We have over 2500 active members throughout Oregon.

Our association supports 19 Master Gardener chapters in Oregon.

I have been a master gardener for 13 years.

Along with my role as the Oregon Master Gardener president, I am involved in a variety of Master gardener projects in Douglas County including the plant clinic, where we answer home garden questions, provide scientifically based Horticultural advice, and teach gardening classes for community education.

Our world is changing, and with that change comes the need for introducing new and sustainable garden practices to our community. Master Gardeners serve as a powerful and accessible liaison between university research and community practice. The Master gardener program is supported by the extension service, a statewide public service program provided by OSU. An OSU extension faculty or staff member manages the Master Gardener program in each of 28 counties.

The Extension master gardener program educates Oregonians about the art and science of growing and caring for plants.

It is important that full funding is available to hire extension faculty to maintain a healthy and relevant program.

The people who are served by Master Gardener programs are beginning and experienced home gardeners seeking advice, teachers looking for help with a school garden, and neighborhood groups wanting advice on a community garden.

When we teach others to grow their own food it can be life changing.

Besides the benefits of learning to grow your own fruits and vegetables the skills we teach are also beneficial for one's physical, mental, and spiritual health. Physically, gardeners stay in shape in the garden. Mentally, you must use math and science in planning out your garden - your brain can get a good workout. Spiritually, the feeling of enjoying your garden bounty and sharing your homegrown fresh fruits and vegetables with friends and family is as uplifting as anything I know.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my experience as a master gardener. I truly appreciate your continued support of OSU extension through providing full funding for our programs,