

FROM: Oregon Cheese Guild
Katie Bray, Executive Director

TO: Ways & Means Subcommittee on Education
Senator Lew Frederick, Co-Chair
Representative Susan McLain, Co-Chair

DT: April 26, 2023

RE: HB 5025 - Support of OSU Statewide Public Service Programs - Extension, Agricultural Experiment Station and Forest Research Lab

I am writing on behalf of the Oregon Cheese Guild, the organization that represents Oregon's artisan cheesemakers, to express my strong support for the OSU Statewide Public Service Programs (Statewides) budget request in HB 5025.

OSU Statewides contribute to our industry through applied research projects such as those happening within OSU's Food Science Department, new product development and testing happening at the Food Innovation Center, and the technical knowledge and advice shared through OSU's statewide Extension network. In order to continue their work supporting Oregon's food and beverage sector and fund critical new programs that address our state's growing needs to maintain the health of our communities, food systems and natural resources, we are requesting \$206 million.

The Oregon Cheese Guild is a nonprofit organization with a staff of one whose mission is promoting the category of Oregon artisan cheese. When I get questions about how to get set up a commercial cheesemaking operation, or a technical challenge facing a small producer, my first recommendation is to get in touch with their local dairy extension agent. This network provides a level of technical expertise and knowledge that our organization is not equipped to give.

While the most visible of Oregon's cheesemakers is the renowned Tillamook County Creamery Association, what keeps our industry thriving is our smaller, artisanal, often family owned, cheesemakers and dairy farmers. They are the constituents who really benefit from the resources provided by the Statewides services.

An increased investment will allow the following programs that support Oregon's cheesemakers:

- OSU sustainable food technologies experts to educate students, conduct impactful research and provide education and technology transfer. The overall focus is to identify and implement financially viable strategies to transform food manufacturing using less land, water, energy, and raw materials while creating less waste, less greenhouse gasses and reducing dependency on plastics. New faculty members will fill current holes in existing skill set and will provide capacity to start up new or strengthen existing programs.
- Regional support of local food and beverage entrepreneurs, connecting food businesses with existing food innovation centers. An emphasis on regional food production will create jobs and commercial activities in small and medium sized towns. Support of Oregon's local and regional food hubs will enhance the viability of regional food markets beyond direct-to-consumer sale.

Sincerely,

Katie Bray

Oregon Cheese Guild