

## Deschutes Land Trust

210 NW IRVING AVENUE, SUITE 102  
BEND, OREGON 97703  
OFFICE: (541) 330-0017  
DESCHUTESLANDTRUST.ORG



CONSERVATION. COMMUNITY. CARING FOR THE LAND.

February 5, 2024

**To: House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources and Water**  
**Re: Support for HB 4060**

**Chair Helm, Vice Chairs Hartman and Owens and Members of the Committee,**

The Deschutes Land Trust works to conserve and care for the lands and waters that sustain Central Oregon so that local communities and the natural world can flourish together for generations to come. Protecting intact farms, ranches and forestlands from development is one of our core areas of focus as these agricultural lands define Central Oregon's landscapes and communities. To date, we have worked with willing landowners to protect over 7,000 acres of working lands from fragmentation, enhancing fish and wildlife habitat and strengthening rural agricultural economies.

We write to you today in strong support of \$10.8M in state funding for the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (HB 4060) which protects farms and ranch lands from development through working lands conservation easements. Without this state funding, \$7.2M already allocated to Oregon through the Natural Resources Conservation Service for this work risks being returned to the federal government and reallocated to other states that fund programs for agricultural land protection. Deschutes Land Trust is currently working with two landowners on conservation easements that risk losing funding if we cannot secure state matching funds through HB 4060.

The Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program is a tremendous asset to our state. With \$10.8 M in state funding for OAHF, Oregon can leverage already awarded federal dollars to invest in our vital farms and ranchlands, protecting tens of thousands of agricultural acres and enhancing our state's natural resource values. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Natasha Bellis".

**Natasha Bellis**

Conservation Director