

Submitter: Kyrsten Williams

On Behalf  
Of:

Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and  
Water

Measure: HB4060

Dear Chair Helm, Vice Chairs Owens and Hartman, and members of the committee:

My name is Kyrsten Williams and I'm a Farmers Market Manager in Portland, OR. I am writing today in support of the Oregon Agricultural Heritage program and HB 4060. OAHP is the beginning of an investment that the state needs to make if it is truly going to support Oregon's community food systems and agricultural future. The conservation management plan and conservation easement portions of the program are great examples of supporting the farmer driven desire to protect the ecosystems of our working lands in harmony with food production. We should make these tools available to as many farmers as possible.

I am personally invested in this topic because I see every day that it is getting more difficult for farmers at our markets to access, maintain, and keep their land. Every week at the Shemanski Park, PSU, and Lents International Farmers Markets I see the impact our local farmers have on the community - they bring people together, they grow the most nutritious, fresh foods, and they work tirelessly to responsibly steward the land they farm. We should not under any circumstances continue to make it more difficult to do this vital work for our communities. Farmers need access to programs like easements and conservations so the people of Oregon can continue to have affordable and fresh food.

There are not enough tools available to keep Oregon's farmland in production and help farmers afford to buy the land they steward. Conservation easements are one of the only widely used tools we are aware of that can permanently lower the cost of accessing farmland. Conservation management plans allow farmers and land stewards to enact the needed restoration and maintenance projects to keep the farm ecosystem functioning and keep our agricultural land viable for generations to come. We are so lucky to have a vibrant community food system here in Oregon and we need to invest in it to keep it viable. This is not the only path forward and we need to continue to find creative, equitable and truly sustainable solutions to our land access crisis, but this is a place to start. Thank you to the committee members and chair who have prioritized this bill and the Oregon Ag Heritage Program. I urge you to support this vital program for the sake of Oregon's communities, land and agricultural future.

Sincerely,  
Kyrsten Williams