

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

My name is Lisa Shaddox and I am a flower farmer from Deschutes County. 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 reside in an area of Oregon that is experiencing tremendous population growth, including a large number of residential developments popping up. Our farmland is so precious, and my fear is that developments will soon swallow up farmland across Central Oregon. We've already seen our county board of commissioners attempt to reverse the very sacred EFU zoning on a large farm property in our area to allow a multi-hundred homesite residential development to go in. This is incredibly concerning, as that particular zoning exists to prevent that exact thing happening. As our land prices continue to soar, more and more farmers are being priced out of this area. With the constant threat of development encroaching on farmland, and the very high bar of affording property here, much of our farmland is destined to disappear. We must protect it as best we can, as once it's lost, it can never be recovered.

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.

Very truly yours,
Lisa Shaddox
Hollyhock Hollow Flower Farm
And founder of the Central Oregon Flower Collective