

Dear Chair Golden, Vice- Chair Nash and Members of the Committee:

My name is Deirdre Geddes, and I am the Director of Sales and Marketing at Hummingbird Wholesale. I am writing in support of SB 887, which aims to create an Organic Policy Specialist position at the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA).

In 2022, the legislature declared organic farming as one of five “emerging sectors” in Oregon and allocated funds for economic assessments of each sector. This assessment identified several opportunities to strengthen economic, agricultural, environmental, and community resilience through the organic sector. It is crucial for Oregon to continue prioritizing support for organic agriculture, and there is an increasing need for a policy specialist who understands the principles and practices of organic farming, production, and market development.

At Hummingbird Wholesale, we actively support Oregon's organic agriculture as a manufacturer and distributor of ingredients. We collaborate with farms and processors to enhance access to organic products in our communities. Investments in organic farming education, advocacy, and essential programs are vital for fostering growth in our agricultural industry. Organic production leads to healthier soil, cleaner water, increased biodiversity, and stronger communities.

We work closely with retailers, manufacturers, institutions, and food service businesses with the goal of increasing organic acreage in Oregon and the Pacific Northwest. The presence of an Organic Policy Specialist would be instrumental in advancing Oregon's organic sector through effective leadership and the integration of supportive policies.

Oregon is well-positioned to take a leading role in the rapidly growing organic industry, which surpassed \$63 billion in 2023. However, to fully realize this potential, both public and private investments are necessary. At Hummingbird, we are committed to driving sales growth in organic food, but Oregon is currently losing ground compared to other leading organic market states, such as Washington and Pennsylvania.

As trade uncertainties and extreme weather events disrupt Oregon's food and agricultural systems, organic practices provide solutions that enhance agricultural and economic resilience while presenting new market opportunities. Establishing an Organic Policy Specialist at the ODA would offer long-term support for a sector that brings numerous benefits to Oregon and its residents.

Sincerely,

Deirdre Geddes
Director of Sales and Marketing, Hummingbird Wholesale