

Submitter: Tonya Sanchez
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and
Wildfire
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB887

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

My name is Tonya Sanchez, Executive Director of Provender Alliance. I am writing in support of SB 887 to create an Organic Policy Specialist position at the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA).

In 2022, the legislature declared organic one of five “emerging sectors” in Oregon and appropriated funds for economic assessments of each sector. The assessment laid out several opportunities to build economic, agricultural, environmental, and community resilience through the organic sector. Oregon must continue to prioritize support for organic agriculture and there is a growing need for a policy specialist who understands the principles and practices of organic farming, production and market creation.

This position would lead the facilitation, marketing, and trade of organic products, and ensure inner- & inter-agency integration of policies supporting organic practices.

Provender Alliance is a 501c-6 non-profit trade organization that has been supporting, and championing, the organic and natural food and products industry for almost 50 years. Prior to my role leading Provender, I spent 20 years helping to market and amplify the voice and products of organic farmers, while working with Organically Grown Company. I've seen firsthand how important it is for the people feeding our families, and nourishing our lands, to have a voice in the legislature. Our planet has never needed our support more than it does today, except for maybe tomorrow. An Organic Policy Specialist would help give a voice to the members of Provender Alliance, and families throughout Oregon. Our members include companies that have been supporting organic agriculture and policies for decades, including farmers, manufacturers, distributors, brokers, educators, and countless independent and natural food retailers.

Our trade needs strong leadership by someone who understands the intricacies of organic growing, scaling and marketing. The organic industry brings revenue and jobs to the state, while preserving our most important asset, our planet. Organic production results in healthier soil, cleaner water, more biodiversity, and healthier communities. Oregon must continue to prioritize support for organic agriculture and there is a growing need for a policy specialist who understands the principles and practices of organic farming, production and market creation.

As trade uncertainties and extreme weather events disrupt Oregon's food and agricultural systems, organic practices offer solutions that support agricultural and economic resilience and offer new market opportunities. Having an Organic Policy Specialist at ODA offers long-term support for an agricultural sector that offers many benefits to Oregon and its residents. Investments in organic farming education, advocacy and programmatic needs are necessary to promote the growth of our agricultural industry. Please support SB 887.

Sincerely,
Tonya Sanchez
Provender Alliance