

## Testimony in Support of HB2979

April 23, 2025

Dear Joint Committee on Ways and Means,

My name is Sara Miller and I am writing today to support HB 2979. I urge you to continue this investment in our regional food system with funding to support resiliency projects for Oregon's farmers, ranchers, food hubs, and farmers markets. I am a first-generation rancher in Wallowa County. I have also worked more than three decades in rural community and small business development, with expertise in community food systems.

My ranch raises grassfed beef which I direct market to a regional customer base. My operation is linked to other local businesses (on-farm mobile harvest, meat processing, hay producers, veterinarians, equipment rental/repair, farm supply, etc.) who all contribute to growing a regional supply chain that can support a more resilient food system in Oregon. As an economic development professional, I have witnessed first-hand the contributions these small businesses and their stakeholders bring to rural Oregon, providing economic opportunities and connecting us to urban markets. I have also seen how Oregon's investment in regional food systems can significantly improve the ability of these businesses to stabilize and diversify our economy.

My ranch has been directly affected by increasingly frequent and costly wildfires, flash floods and drought. I know how costly and stressful severe weather events are. And I see small farms and ranches across Oregon getting hit with similar impacts and working hard to adapt, be able to continue to raise food and get it to people. Resilience programs like HB 2979 bring greatly needed funding opportunities to operations like mine which provide value-added products to a regional customer base.

I know some NE Oregon businesses, including diversified vegetable farms, producers of grassfed lamb and beef, and a food hub, were able to complete important resiliency projects supported by the previous Disaster Resiliency funding. I also know many more who, given the opportunity, would use HB 2979 funding to strengthen their operations to prepare for increasingly extreme weather events.

We need Oregon to renew its commitment to our small farms and local food system. Investment in a more resilient regional food system helps keep our communities fed. It also helps minimize the negative effects of fluctuations in commodity food supply chains. These local and regional food options are a vital part of our wellbeing, environmental stewardship, and the future of food. Please support HB 2979.

Thank you,

Sara Miller

Joseph, Oregon