



February 2, 2024

To House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

From: Oregon Association of Conservation Districts

Re: **HB 4148 – Support**

Chair Helm and Committee Members,

The Oregon Association of Conservation Districts (OACD) represents Oregon's 45 Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs), special districts governed by elected boards. The Districts protect and enhance soil quality, water quality and quantity, and habitat by providing technical services and supporting voluntary conservation in partnership with private landowners and managers as well as federal, state, and nonprofit partners.

OACD supports HB 4148 because of its strong uplift to the Oregon Invasive Species Council and, in particular, its \$750,000 provision for the "Statewide Invasive Species Emergency Control" account. Oregon is in the crosshairs of several emerging invasive species threats that are expected to cause millions of dollars in economic, environmental, social and human health harm. Devastating invasive pest species such as the emerald ash borer, quagga mussels and Japanese beetles have already been discovered in or near Oregon, and statewide programs are woefully underfunded in mounting a comprehensive, effective management responses. Early management of these species are crucial in limiting their spread and minimizing economic and environmental impacts. Agricultural crops, nursery stock, timber harvest, tourism and recreational revenue are all expected to be impacted at great magnitude should these harmful invasive species become established. Agriculture practices that support carbon sequestration work can also be funded through this program as part of conservation management programs. This part of the OAHF fund is an important tool to move forward with further conservation on our working lands.

The Oregon Invasive Species Council is a legislatively-mandated, well-coordinated organizing body of statewide leaders in invasive species management across Oregon. The "Statewide Invasive Species Emergency Control" account is administered by the OISC and funding for it through HB 4148 would provide a stop-gap measure for responding to newly detected invasive species threats in Oregon. Support of HB 4148 also provides funding for Council operations as well as an imperative "Education & Outreach" grant that was established by the Oregon legislature in 2001 but has never been funded. Passage of HB 4148 will assist the state in becoming better prepared for preventing and managing the far-reaching impacts of invasive species threats to Oregon. We urge you to give your full support of passage of HB 4148.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input.

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