



January 26, 2022

Oregon State Board of Agriculture
635 Capitol St NE
Salem, OR 97301-2532

Dear State Board of Agriculture members,

On behalf of the Oregon Wine Council and our members, thank you for the opportunity to provide an update on our legislative priorities to the Oregon Board of Agriculture. The Oregon Wine Council was founded in 2019 by a committed group of industry leaders to advocate on behalf of growers, producers and businesses supporting Oregon wine. Since then, we have grown our membership and influence in Salem significantly. We currently represent over 50 percent of the Oregon wine grapes grown, produced and sold and have helped the industry navigate the challenges of the pandemic, the 2020 wildfires and a multitude of legislative threats.

As we approach the 2022 legislative session, our biggest priority issue is the proposed agriculture worker overtime bill and have been working closely with other agriculture industries to work with stakeholders and legislators to develop an approach to this complicated issue that works for Oregon. As you know, many agriculture operations run on extremely thin margins and serve as price takers – and wine grape growers who sell their grapes are no different. We are committed to finding a solution on the agriculture worker overtime proposal that is workable for all stakeholders, including our grower members.

Second, we are keeping a close eye on the legislature's proposal to incorporate wine in cans into Oregon's Bottle Bill, particularly in the wake of the passage of the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) program last year. Together with our other colleagues in the wine industry, we are encouraging legislators to hold off on any proposals to bring wine containers into the Bottle Bill until we have a chance to look at how that would integrate with the new EPR program. Our industry needs more time and information about the implementation of the EPR program before we can begin looking at adding wine containers to Oregon's Bottle Bill.

Finally, but perhaps most importantly, we are committed to advocating for increased funding and resources for enforcement against illegal cannabis operations, particularly those in Southern Oregon. As I'm sure you're aware, these illegal operations are having catastrophic impacts on precious water resources, labor availability, livability and public safety in these impacted communities, let alone the human rights violations and human trafficking that we understand are taking place at many of these sites. We stand united with the impacted communities in Southern Oregon, legal hemp and marijuana growers and other impacted agricultural industries in doing everything we can to rid our state of these illegal grows.

As we move beyond the 2022 legislative session, we know that the many changes in the legislature's makeup will require the wine industry to focus on relationship building and education of new members. OWC plans to prioritize that relationship building in the interim.

The OWC represents a diverse set of growers, winemakers and wine industry members and we value the opportunity to work closely with our agriculture industry colleagues. We encourage you to reach out to our team with any questions you may have about our work or opportunities to work together to benefit agriculture operations in our state.

Thank you for the opportunity to share these updates with you and please do not hesitate to contact our team with questions.

Sincerely,

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