

Chair Clem and Members of the Committee,

I write to you as both a parent, and the manager of three school gardens in the Corvallis School District, through the Healthy Youth Program at the Linus Pauling Institute – a not-for-profit youth and family outreach organization of Oregon State University.

With this letter, I am asking for your support of HB 2579, to expand funding for Oregon’s Farm to School and School Garden programs. Farm to School Programs support students, farmers, and communities. Here are just a few examples of how such programs have impacted those with whom we work:

Nutritional impacts:

“I cannot believe you got my son to eat kale, and like it!” This quote, from one of the parents of an elementary student in our program, illustrates how children who actively participate in growing and preparing food from their school gardens are more willing to try new or previously “unlikable” vegetables. We have seen this repeatedly. And research backs it up: multiple studies have found gardening, nutrition, and cooking classes (such as those included in Farm to School and School Garden programs) can lead to dietary improvements in children, including those at greatest risk for obesity.

Academic impacts:

“Your [garden class] is often the only reason [my child] goes to school.” (Quote from the guardian of a student who attends the garden elective course we teach at the high school). School garden programs not only provide a place-based platform for hands-on learning, they can be safe and constructive alternatives to traditional classroom settings – which, for some students such as the youth described in the quote above, are the only places for struggling students to thrive. Further, research suggests experiential garden-based learning positively impacts students’ academic outcomes, especially in science, math, and social sciences.

Thank you for the consideration and for your service.

Sincerely,
Candace Russo, Corvallis