

Chair Clem and Members of the Committee,

I am Mindy Bell, Executive Director, School Garden Project of Lane County.

I'm writing to ask you to support HB 2579 and the -2 Amendments, to expand funding for Oregon's Farm to School and School Garden programs. Farm to School Programs support students, farmers and communities. Specifically, I have seen it make a difference for the 1,516 elementary and middle school children that School Garden Project of Lane County serves annually.

Our program receives some funding through the Oregon's Farm to School and Garden program. We teach "Science in the Garden" lessons to children throughout the 4J, Bethel and Springfield School Districts. 13 of our 19 partner schools are Title 1A schoolwide programs and located in high poverty, low income communities. 10 of our 19 partner schools are eligible for the Community Eligibility Program (CEP) for free lunch and located in communities with high rates of SNAP and TANF benefits recipients. Our program teaches children about science, basic gardening skills, and how to grow your own food.

For many of our students, our class is the only opportunity they may have to taste "fresh" fruits and vegetables. Recently a teacher shared that a child in her 5<sup>th</sup> grade class that has been bounced between family members for most of his life and is currently homeless came to her and said, "Thank you for garden class. I get to taste things that I have never tasted before!"

Through teacher proctored "pre" and "post assessments, we can show the impact of our garden education program. For the 2017-18 school year our statistics were as follows:

- 88% of our students showed an increase in science knowledge
- 69% of children participating in our program reported trying new vegetables
- 67% of children participating in our program stated they liked more vegetables.

Your support of HB 2579 will have impact throughout the state by supporting programs such as School Garden Project of Lane County.

Please let me know if you would like to see our program in action. I would be happy to give you a tour of our gardens.

Together, we can make a difference in the lives of children throughout Oregon.

Regards,

Mindy Bell  
Executive Director



*Committed to a future in which children become healthy adults who eat fruits and vegetables, know the basics of growing food, steward the natural world, and contribute to a thriving community.*



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