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Education Subcommittee of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means

1 June, 2019

Dear Co-Chairs Frederick and McLain and Members of the Committee,

As a resident of the rural Bandon area for more than 40 years I am very interested in seeing our area, including our farmers and fishermen, and all of our children and families thrive.

I'm writing to ask you to support HB 2579 and the most recent Amendments, to expand funding for Oregon's farm to school and school garden programs. HB 2579 expands funding for schools to buy Oregon foods and for farm- and garden-based education.

This program has been very successful in helping Oregon's economy, particularly our farmers, and in encouraging healthy eating for children, which can help establish lifelong habits. In addition, gardening has been shown to benefit mental health for both children and adults.

I am retired now, but when I worked as the Education Specialist for a Head Start program, I facilitated a Farm to School project with a mini-grant that we received. I saw first-hand how effective it was for our staff and children. Not only were we able to purchase more local produce and fish for our meal program, but we expanded our class gardens and our nutrition education component around growing and eating healthy food. Many teachers were motivated to participate and children were thrilled to be growing food, and were eager to taste the food they had grown. This enthusiasm spread to parents, as well at several sites.

The Farm to School program has proven to be a wonderful non-partisan win/win program that can help support good nutrition, teach life skills, and strengthen Oregon's economy, particularly in our struggling rural communities. I hope you will do all you can to support its continuation and growth.

Thank you for your consideration and for your service to our State.

Sincerely,

Donna Leveridge-Campbell, M.S.Ed.
Bandon