

Co-Chairs Johnson, Steiner-Hayward and Rayfield and members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means:

I am a teacher at Kalapuya High School in the Bethel School District, and I am testifying to ask you to restore funding for the Oregon Farm to School Grant Program.

Bethel School District receives both the Education grants and the grants for local food in school meals. I have witnessed countless numbers of times the impact that this funding has had on our students.

Farm to School Grants provide funding for schools to purchase healthy, local foods and provide farm and garden based education. Our farm is a living laboratory that enables my students to engage almost daily with the farm in some aspect of their learning. Most of my students experience food insecurity in their own lives. Many of them, however, go on to build gardens at home from the knowledge they gained on the farm, and with the produce coming off of the farm, they learn how to prepare healthy, fresh, and local foods at low-cost, and then utilize these skills in their own kitchens. The Bethel Farm hosts field trips led by our high school youth in which they share their knowledge and enthusiasm by teaching what they've learned about agriculture and preparing healthy foods. We have a summer camp program made available to all 4th and 5th grade youth in our district at no cost and led by high school camp counselors. The grant makes this possible.

The grant also supports our summer programming in which we are able to create internships for our youth to assist with all aspects of managing the farm. When asked about working on the farm this past summer, one student remarked:

"Where else are you gonna learn and see first-hand the seeds you planted produce food, bees doing their thing and check up on the honey process, native plants and the bugs that visit them, watch food scraps turn into soil, feed your community for free, and get to take home whatever food you want"?

This statement includes just a snapshot of the ways in which the education grant impacts our students. Please do all you can to restore funding for the Oregon Farm to School Grant Program.

Thank you,
Rich Dambrov