



March 15, 2023

Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: Funding for Oregon’s Farm to School Grant Program

Co-Chairs Senator Frederick and Representative McLain and members of the Committee:

Organically Grown Company, known in the industry as OGC, began 43 years ago as a non-profit, grower’s cooperative, selling fresh, organic produce & specialty crops. Along the way, OGC became an S-class corporation in 1999, and in 2008 an employee stock ownership program (ESOP) took effect. Then in 2018, OGC became proudly owned by the first-of-its-kind, Sustainable Food and Agriculture Perpetual Purpose Trust (SFAPPT), an ownership model that allows us to remain independent and true to our mission – *promoting and inspiring the growth of the organic agriculture movement.*

Today, as a Trust-owned organization, we operate out of 7 facilities in the pacific northwest, employ over 250 produce professionals and in 2022 served PNW eaters over 125 million pounds of organic produce. And since 2016, OGC has distributed more than 300,000 pounds of organic fruits and vegetables to Oregon’s schools, across 10 districts, through the Farm to School Grant and the USDA Pilot Program for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables.

Throughout our journey we have remained dedicated to not only helping organic farmers get their products to consumers, but also in leading policy/advocacy action on behalf of stakeholders, including our farmers who are too busy on their farms to meet with legislators. In our 2022 farmer survey, one-third of respondents stated that the lack of [local] markets is preventing the growth and expansion of their operations and a staggering 57% of respondents also cited needing help accessing grants, such as this one.

In support of our stakeholders, our state’s children, and to keep Oregon’s agricultural sector strong into the future, we ask that you approve the funding request of \$10.2 million for the next biennium for the Oregon Farm to School and School Garden Network (OFSSGN). Let’s make sure we give Oregon’s farms the opportunity to feed Oregon’s children, give schools the opportunity to source local, healthy food, and provide the technical assistance for farmers to access farm to school programs.

Respectfully submitted,
Mike Dill
Manager of Policy and Advocacy

SUPPORT THE OFSSGN

- *Provide funding for schools to purchase healthy, local food.
- *Support local farmers and food businesses.
- *Educate our youth about how food is produced.
- *Help Oregon producers meet the needs of schools and increase their capacity to sell to schools and other institutions.
- *Emphasize organic and sustainably produced food.

