



Connecting. Educating. Sustaining

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

March 16, 2023

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

I am writing on behalf of *Grow Portland* in support of the Farm to School Grant Program in the Oregon Department of Education's budget. This Grant program provides critical funding for schools and early childhood education programs to purchase Oregon foods, hands-on farm and garden education programs, equipment and infrastructure for food producers and technical assistance for the farm to school community. Sustaining the current level of \$10.2 million dollars will support dependable business relationships between schools and food producers and maintain consistent educational programs that connect students to agriculture and nutrition.

Grow Portland currently partners with 13 public schools in two districts, 9 of which are low income, to provide integrated school-day education and ongoing stewardship support of school gardens. Each month, 6000 students spend time in their school gardens with our Garden Educators, learning hands-on science related lessons while planting, growing, and harvesting their own food. The Farm to School grant is vital to not only sustaining our current programs, but being responsive to new partners who would like these opportunities as well.

As school garden support organization, we value this grant program because of shared impacts such as:

Classroom Teacher, March 2023: *"I like the content. It is hands on. Kids get to eat things, make things and take things home. It gives them a love of garden, learning to eat healthy foods and the outdoors."*

4th Grade Student, June 2022: *"garden school is important to me because I got to learn how to plant seeds, learn about all the different bugs."*

I ask that you support including this grant program in the Oregon Department of Education's budget at the current level of \$10.2 million so this program can continue to support healthy kids, schools and communities. Thank you for your time.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michelle Welton".

Michelle Welton
Executive Director, Grow Portland
Portland, OR