

Ecotrust

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

March 16, 2023

Co-Chairs Senator Dembrow and Representative Pham and members of the Committee:

I am writing on behalf of Ecotrust in support of the request to **include the Farm to School Equipment and Infrastructure Grant Program in the Oregon Department of Agriculture's budget.**

The Farm to School Equipment and Infrastructure Grant Program provides vital funding for Oregon food producers. In the past, ODA has received over \$2M in requests from Oregon food producers related to this program. By including \$500,000 in the ODA budget for this program, producers can access equipment to grow their businesses, giving schools and early childhood centers more opportunities to purchase Oregon foods and fill their menus with dietary variety, seasonal flavor, and cuisines that reflect the cultural and racial diversity of Oregon students. This is a win-win-win for students, producers, and communities.

Ecotrust is a Portland, Oregon-based nonprofit working at the intersection of equity, the economy, and the environment for an equitable, prosperous, and climate-smart future. We have supported farm to school efforts in Oregon and nationally for more than 15 years because we know these programs significantly contribute to resilient food systems. Farm to school investments create economic opportunity, improve land management, promote equitable outcomes, and build pathways to better community health. In particular, **the Farm to School Equipment and Infrastructure Grant Program prioritizes Black-, person-of-color-, woman-, veteran-, tribal- and/or Indigenous-owned and/or operated farms and businesses.** The financial and technical support to scale up, provided by the Program, addresses the historic and current exclusion from access to land, capital, and intergenerational wealth building these producers have experienced and creates opportunities to access the consistent markets of schools, early childhood centers, and other institutions.

In Oregon, thanks in large part to the Farm to School Grant Program, there is a significant demand from schools for diverse local products. **The Farm to School Equipment and Infrastructure Grant Program** addresses a significant barrier for small and mid-sized producers selling to schools and early childhood centers. Schools and early childhood centers have specific requirements for products in regards to quantities, delivery, storage, and food safety and this grant supports producers in being able to meet these requirements.

Ecotrust urges you to include the **Farm to School Equipment and Infrastructure Grant Program** in the ODA budget at \$500,000 as previously requested in ODA's Agency Request Budget. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration and for your service to this wonderful place we call home.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Angela Hedstrom".

Angela Hedstrom
Community Food Systems Manager, Ecotrust
Portland, OR