

Submitter: Melina Barker

On Behalf  
Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Natural  
Resources

Measure: HB5002

Co-Chairs Dembrow and Pham and members of the Committee, my name is Melina Barker and I am the Director of the Oregon Farm to School & School Garden Network. The Network has 1,900 community members that are primarily food producers, child nutrition professionals, and educators.

Farm to School is a national movement and Oregon has one of the longest standing programs in the nation. Oregon's Farm to School Grant Program is a suite of funding programs that supports the purchase of Oregon foods for schools and early childcare education centers; funds hands-on farm and garden educational programs; supports equipment and infrastructure for food producers; and funds technical assistance and training for the farm to school community.

I am testifying today in support of the request to have the Farm to School Equipment and Infrastructure Grant Program included in the Oregon Department of Agriculture's budget. This Grant program provides funding for food producers to access necessary equipment to meet the demands of the school marketplace. This program is based on a clearly identified gap for school-ready products available to Oregon schools. Schools and institutions have specific product needs that small and mid-sized producers are not equipped to provide, such as produce that is chopped and washed, or refrigerated. While this program is small, it meets this need and facilitates the success of Oregon's Farm to School Program. I've submitted to the record an information sheet about the need for, and impact of, the Equipment and Infrastructure Program, as well as the overall Farm to School Grant Program.

The ODA market access program doesn't receive general funds to support developing, marketing or promoting resilient local food systems. The Farm to School Grants are one of the only opportunities for the state to support ODA's work in this area.

In past legislation, this program has been part of the Oregon Department of Education budget and then transferred to the Oregon Department of Agriculture. This process has been inefficient and time consuming, taking more than a year to transfer funds, significantly delaying implementation. We are requesting \$500K for this program. In the past the ODA has received over \$2M in requests. This request would not increase total spending on the Farm to School Program, simply move this grant from one agency to another. The ODA did include this request in its Agency Request Budget as a Policy Option Package. We support this request, and are

asking that \$500,000 for this grant program go directly to ODA and be included in the ODA Budget going forward.

Thank you for your time and I am more than happy to answer any questions you might have.