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Dear Co-Chairs Senator Campos and Representative Valderrama,

Thank you all for taking the time to make additional health equity investments in OHA's Public Health Modernization Budget a priority with Senate Bill 5525

My name is Jason Skipton, I have been the executive director with Growing Gardens for nearly 7 years and have been experienced the direct impacts that COVID-19 has had in our community and organization. At **Growing Gardens**, an Oregon nonprofit with over 27 years of experience, we work across the state of Oregon to ensure that children, families and individuals who are currently incarcerated have access to healthy and culturally nourishing foods to increase the overall health and wellness of our communities. **Growing Gardens is in full support of Senate Bill 5525.**

Health equity is at the heart of our work to ensure that low-income and communities of color have access to culturally nourishing foods and programs. We deepened our focus during the COVID-19 pandemic to positively impact multiple social determinates of health. You called on us to act, respond and reach our communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. We answered your call and are now in a place to continue this work to keep our communities active, involved and healthy. **We are the vital lifeline directly into the community.** We now call on you all to take the bold decision to support our work and ensure we are here to respond to future public health calls.

With funding at the requested investment of \$268 million, we will be able to reach over 1,000 more families, children and currently incarcerated individuals through our health programs. We are a member of the **Community Health Equity Coalition** that is comprised of more than 80 community-based organizations- we collectively respond to public health needs for more than 500,000 Oregonians- communities in every part of our state.

This is why we urge your yes vote on **SB 5525**. Thank you for your time and your leadership.

Sincerely,

Jason Skipton
Executive Director
[Growing Gardens](http://www.growing-gardens.org)

We help people grow their own food!

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