

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

March 20, 2023

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

I am writing as one of the founding members of the Oregon Farm to School and School Garden Network. In 2006 we began the pursuit to put Oregon food on Oregon school lunch tables. The barriers were high for local farmers and food processors to sell into local school districts. Thanks to the Oregon Farm to School and School Grants, local farmers and schools have better systems in place to build strong relationships and increase Oregon's food economy.

But changing out the food on students' plates was not enough. It was equally important to educate students about how the food was grown, where and by whom. No better place to truly understand the value of food on one's plate than planting seeds in a school garden or visiting a local farm.

Now the \$10.2 million grant funds provide crucial grant funding to schools and early childhood education programs. The funding purchases 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 this current level of funding will support dependable business relationships between schools and food producers and maintain consistent educational programs that connect students to agriculture and nutrition

As an advocate for Oregon Farm to Schools and School Gardens, I have working relationships with the elementary and middle schools in my Portland Rose City Park neighborhood. I volunteer weekly with organizations that use these grants to deliver consistent school garden programming. Each week I experience the success of this funding as students are so eager to learn about the food on their table.

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.

Suzanne Briggs
Portland, Oregon