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

March 22, 2023

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

I am writing on behalf of Growing Gardens 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.

I am a garden educator at a public elementary school in Portland, OR. As an educator, I support this grant program because it builds skills for wellness and health in kids and communities and a strong local food system and supports our local economy. In monthly garden lessons with me, over 335 K-5 students are able to learn outdoors, grow their own food, and cook and prepare it. My students are discovering new fruits and vegetables and are able to try it in a variety of settings, such as tasting it during garden lessons, in the school cafeteria, and planting it in the garden. Trying fruits and vegetables prepared in different ways in many settings helps students find a recipe that they enjoy. They enjoy the produce even more when they've grown it or are tasting it fresh! Our school garden cannot produce enough vegetables to feed all students in these environments, so Growing Gardens purchases many from local Oregon farmers and supports our local food system. It is also great to connect students and their families with role models from our local food system and make sure that families have access to fresh and locally grown produce.

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.

Cat Ayala  
Growing Gardens  
Portland, OR

