

Submitter: Heather Lowe

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Education

Measure: HB5014

Good morning esteemed Co-Chairs and members of the Committee.

My name is Heather Lowe and I am the proud principal of Talent Elementary in beautiful southern Oregon

I am testifying today in support of the Farm to School Grant Program included in the Oregon Department of Education's budget. I urge you to strongly consider fully funding this grant at \$10.2 million dollars, as this is what it will take to continue their vital work in communities such as mine.

Phoenix Talent School has benefited greatly from this work directly. Students in our elementary schools receive weekly garden classes when they get a break from their traditional school work to get outside and learn more about agriculture and gardening. In my opinion, there is no better lesson than one that allows students to get their hands dirty! Rogue Valley Farm to School has been especially responsive to our needs, as we navigated the devastating Almeda Fire in 2020 along with a the global pandemic. Instead of holding off on programming, they quickly got to work and figured out how to continue to support and engage students remotely. There is no doubt that this helped many of our students through an extremely difficult time.

In addition to their incredible in-school programming, Farm to School helps to provide vital nutrition to our most deserving people, the children in Oregon. Through their collaborative work with schools and food service providers, they are able to help secure locally sourced fresh produce in our cafeterias. On top of that wonderful benefit, they do monthly tastings in our schools, exposing our students to delicious new fruits and vegetables that they might not otherwise have access to. It is always an exciting day at school when the cafeteria is a buzz with kids trying out new things! In short, Farm to School provides enriching programming and vital nutrition to our amazing Oregon students.

Thank you for your time and consideration in fully funding the Farm to School Grant Program at \$10.2 million.

Respectfully Yours,

Heather Lowe
Principal, Talent Elementary School

