

Ecotrust

Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

April 7, 2023

Co-Chairs Steiner and Sanchez and members of the Committee:

I am writing on behalf of Ecotrust in **support of maintaining the current service level of \$10.2M dollars for the Farm to School Grant Program**. 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, leverages federal dollars to support dependable business relationships between schools and food producers and maintain consistent educational programs that connect students to agriculture and nutrition.

Ecotrust is a Portland, Oregon-based nonprofit working at the intersection of equity, the economy, and the environment for an equitable, prosperous, and climate-smart future. We have supported farm to school efforts in Oregon for more than 15 years and endorse the Oregon Farm to School Grant Program because of what it makes possible in our state:

- **Healthy, local foods in school meals, summer meals, and Head Start programs.** These foods are critical for Oregon kids, especially those suffering from food insecurity.
- **Support for student health, well-being, and belonging,** including hands-on learning in school gardens, hiring educators who reflect the demographics of the students they teach, and a food system curriculum that offers instruction about traditional agricultural activities and the critical role of farm workers

- **Proven economic impact for Oregon farmers and Oregon communities.** In 2020, for every \$1 invested by the legislature in Farm to School Grant Program funds, schools spent \$5 on Oregon foods. For every \$1 schools spent on local food, \$2 was returned to Oregon's economy.
- **Advancing equity with competitive grants for schools** to prioritize purchases of products from businesses owned or operated by Black, Indigenous, or people of color; women; veterans; or tribes. Funding also supports equipment and training for Oregon producers to meet school needs and increase their capacity to sell to other institutions.

Ecotrust is proud to be part of a large and diverse coalition of businesses, nonprofits, school districts, PTAs, farmers, food producers, advocates, and more who support the Farm to School Grant Program. Together we recognize the vital support this program provides our kids, schools, and communities. For nearly two decades, Oregon has been a national leader in farm to school programs, and we urge you to continue this leadership. I ask that you **support including this grant program in the state 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 thoughtful consideration and for your service to this wonderful place we call home.

Sincerely,



Angela Hedstrom
Community Food Systems Manager, Ecotrust
Portland, OR