



May 3, 2023

Chairs Steiner and Sanchez and Members of the Committee,

My name is Melina Barker and I am the Director of the Oregon Farm to School & School Garden Network, a stakeholder driven Network with over 1,900 community members that are primarily food producers, child nutrition professionals, and educators. Farm to School is a national movement and Oregon has been a leader with one of the longest standing programs.

I am writing to urge you to maintain full funding at the current service level of \$10.2 million dollars for the Farm to School Grant Program. Any cuts to this program would have significant impacts on students and local food producers and negate the progress Oregon has made in establishing systems that support hands-on educational programs and access to local food.

Farm to School programs support local food in school meals and provide hands-on education programs that teach students about where they're food comes from and integrate classroom subjects through real life applications in agriculture and nutrition.

These programs connect schools and communities, help local farms maintain and stabilize their businesses, build healthy life skills, and support social-emotional learning through connection to place, nature and nourishment. Now is the time to ensure that we provide sustained and reliable funding for these programs so students, food producers and schools can continue to build dependable relationships and deepen partnerships.

I imagine many of you have heard stories of how farm to school programs have made a difference for a student or farmer in your community. In Farm to School, we talk about working in three spaces- the Cafeteria, Classroom and Community. Oregon's Farm to School Grant Program is a carefully designed, comprehensive suite of funding programs that targets these three areas through grants that support the purchase of Oregon foods for schools and early childcare education centers; funds hands-on farm and garden educational programs; and supports local food producers. I ask that you support funding this program at the current service level.

Thank you for your time.

Melina Barker
Director
Oregon Farm to School & School Garden Network