

Submitter: Melina Barker  
On Behalf Of: Oregon Farm to School Network  
Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and  
Wildfire  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB887

Dear Chair Golden, Vice-Chair Nash and Members of the Committee:

My name is Melina Barker. I am the Director of the Oregon Farm to School Network, a community-driven network of nearly 2,000 members across Oregon. I am writing in support of SB 887 to create an Organic Policy Specialist position at the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA).

In 2022, the legislature declared organic one of five “emerging sectors” in Oregon and appropriated funds for economic assessments of each sector. The assessment laid out several opportunities to build economic, agricultural, environmental, and community resilience through the organic sector. Oregon must continue to prioritize support for organic agriculture and there is a growing need for a policy specialist who understands the principles and practices of organic farming, production, and market creation.

This position would lead the facilitation, marketing, and trade of organic products, and ensure inner- & inter-agency integration of policies supporting organic practices.

The Farm to School movement stands strong in our values that local food should support environmental health as well as worker safety and a strong local economy. Students in school are learning about the importance of organic growing practices and schools want to support producers using these practices. Organic production results in healthier soil, cleaner water, more biodiversity, and healthier communities. Oregon must continue to prioritize support for organic agriculture and there is a growing need for a policy specialist who understands the principles and practices of organic farming, production, and market creation.

As trade uncertainties and extreme weather events disrupt Oregon’s food and agricultural systems, organic practices offer solutions that support agricultural and economic resilience and offer new market opportunities. Having an Organic Policy Specialist at ODA offers long-term support for an agricultural sector that offers many benefits to Oregon and its residents.

Sincerely,

Melina Barker

Oregon Farm to School Network, Director