

Submitter: Megan Bruehl
On Behalf Of: 12M for Farm to School
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee
On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB5515

Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Education
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301
March 12, 2025

Co-Chairs Senator Sollman and Representative Ruiz and members of the
Committee,

I am testifying today in support of funding for the Farm to School Grant Program included in the Oregon Department of Education's budget at \$12 million dollars. This represents a 9% increase from the current service level. This Grant program provides funding for schools and early childhood education programs to purchase Oregon foods, hands-on farm and garden education programs and technical assistance for the farm to school community. This past biennium, there were over \$15 million dollars of requests for this funding. With increases in costs of food, supplies and staffing over the past few years, this modest increase is needed simply to maintain the current level of programming.

I support farm to school because of how much it uplifts our community. We must invest in children's health and well-being as their school years are foundational in their development long-term. Connection with nature and wholesome foods foster health and nourish young children emotionally and physically. Children must be connected to nature if they are to become stewards of our land.

The program also builds a strong local food system and supports our local economy.

Over \$6M in Federal funding for Local Food for Schools has been eliminated by the USDA, now more than ever we need to increase state funding for farm to school.

Finally, this program supports schools as hubs for communities, especially during times of crisis such as wildfires and pandemic. We need community now more than ever.

I ask that you support including this grant program in the Oregon Department of Education's budget at \$12 million. Thank you for your time.

Megan Bruehl
Portland, OR