

Submitter: Michelle Week
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee
On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB5515

Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

March, 12th, 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 it's imperative we support our local economy builders, job creators and healthy produce suppliers, FARMERS, in accessing markets such as schools. This not only supports our local businesses and strengthens our economies today, it further strengthens and supports our economy into the future by investing in our State's children - our FUTURE. It should be a no brainer to want to ensure children receive healthy, nutritious meals while in the care of our educators, but sadly wanted to ensure no one goes hungry, let alone can have access to a diet that helps them thrive, is not enough for many in our community. It's well known that nutrition plays a key and impactful role in a human brains ability to receive and retain new knowledge, to think quickly, creatively and critically, all skills that when invested in offer ten fold returns over the course of a human life. Farms don't and have never thrived under capitalism - from stolen land, stolen labor, to continued commodity crop subsidies, our small, medium, local specialty crop producers deserve a helping hand especially when the investment results innumerable benefits to our community for decades.

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 Supports schools as hubs for communities especially during times of crisis such as

wildfires and pandemic

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.

Michelle Week
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