

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

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

For the record, my name is Lisa Parlette, and I am a resident of Beaverton. I am writing today to strongly advocate for the full funding of the Farm to School Grant Program, as included in the Oregon Department of Education's budget, at the requested \$12 million. This represents a crucial 9% increase over the current service level.

This program is vital for Oregon's children and our local economy. It provides essential funding for schools and early childhood education programs to:

Procure fresh, locally sourced Oregon foods: This not only nourishes our children with healthy options, but also directly supports Oregon farmers and strengthens our regional food system.

Implement hands-on farm and garden education: These programs cultivate a deeper understanding of where food comes from, fostering a lifelong appreciation for healthy eating and potentially sparking future careers in agriculture.

The demand for this program far exceeds its current funding. In the last biennium, requests surpassed \$15 million, highlighting the urgent need for increased support. Moreover, with the escalating costs of food, supplies, and staffing, this modest increase is not a luxury, but a necessity to maintain current program levels.

The benefits of farm-to-school extend beyond nutrition. By exposing children to diverse, locally grown produce, we are:

Promoting healthy eating habits: Establishing a foundation for lifelong wellness.

Cultivating an understanding of local agriculture: Connecting children to their community and its resources.

Stimulating our local economy: Investing in Oregon farmers and businesses.

Furthermore, the recent elimination of over \$6 million in federal Local Food for Schools funding by the USDA underscores the critical importance of increased state

investment. Now more than ever, Oregon must step up to ensure our children have access to healthy, locally sourced food and enriching educational experiences.

Therefore, I urge you to prioritize the Farm to School Grant Program and fully fund it at \$12 million. This investment will yield significant returns for the health and well-being of Oregon's children, our local economy,

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Lisa Parlette
Beaverton, OR