

LEARN Associates, INC. dba – EVOO Cannon Beach

March 17, 2025

Chair Neron, Vice-Chair Dobson, Vice-Chair McIntyre and Members of the House Committee on Education:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of HB 3568 – the Seafood to Schools Act.

This bill is important to me as a chef, educator and advocate for the local economy. I see incredible opportunities by passing this bill. Not only does this open significant product development by chefs and other food service professionals, but its throughput also puts healthy meals into schools. I have been working with the Seaside school district to educate our youth about where our food comes from. This year, we have seen the acceptance of seafood and under-utilized species through hands on discussion, cooking and interactive activities with the students and fishers. This opportunity would be multiplied by accessing these funds! Kids accept new experiences by engaging and this money can help do just that.

Clearly, this bill will support our fishing industry on the coast, as well as provide healthy proteins to our children around the state. It's a win for the fishing industry, for our local economies on the coast, and our children's health.

Right now, our Coastal communities are in the process of building the necessary infrastructure and capacity to bring more Oregon-landed seafood to coastal and inland communities in our state. Through active work on this issue, OCVA and the Oregon Ocean Cluster (OOC) connected with the Oregon Farm to School Network to explore expanding access to - and education about - seafood for Oregon students. This has become the Seafood to Schools working group.

While the Seafood to Schools working group has successfully increased sales to schools, coordinated culinary training and resources for child nutrition programs, developed seafood recipes for child nutrition programs, it has also identified opportunities and needs for future growth. Please keep this amazing momentum moving and help raise this effort to the next level of success!!

The Seafood to Schools Bill is a wonderful way to ensure that school food preparers and students have technical support to prepare fresh local seafood. It also would support training for future chefs in seafood butchery and preparation, in addition to sparking their imaginations through development of creative kid-friendly local seafood dishes.

This funding is not an expenditure; it's an investment that will pay off for generations. We encourage you to pass HB 3568. It's good for the fishing industry, it's good for our coastal economy and it's healthy for our children.

Sincerely,

Bob Neroni, Chef, Entrepreneur, Educator & Advocate
LEARN Associates, Inc.