

Submitter: Erin Maidlow  
On Behalf Of: 12 Million for Farm to School  
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee  
On Education  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB5515

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

I am writing on behalf of Umpqua Valley Farm to School (UVF2S) in support of the Farm to School Grant Program in the Oregon Department of Education's budget. This Grant program provides critical 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. We are requesting funding at \$12 million which represents a modest 9% increase from current service level. 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. This funding will support dependable business relationships between schools and food producers and maintain consistent educational programs that connect students to agriculture and nutrition.

UVF2S provides free, agricultural education, procurement and education support, and producer support in Douglas County. Our programs target Title 1 schools in rural areas, where food insecurity is at a higher rate than the Oregon state average. Farm to School provides fresh, local foods to students and families while also teaching them how to grow their own, and teaching about ways for low-income families to access local foods by utilizing SNAP benefits at local farms and markets. We work closely with students with special needs and those facing environmental, economic, and social barriers to health to provide accessible programming which will expand and encourage health and wellbeing in our community. This program is invaluable and is facing cuts to critical funding at the federal level. In 2024, UVF2S put \$60,000 back into our local agricultural community, direct to producers through the Farm to School work that we do.

We support this grant program because it builds skills for wellness and health in kids and communities. It builds a strong local food system and supports our local economy. It 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 so this program can continue to support healthy

kids, schools and communities. Thank you for your time.

Erin Maidlow  
Umpqua Valley Farm to School  
Douglas County, OR