



## **Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Education**

Oregon State Capitol  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, Oregon 97301

March 10, 2025

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

I am writing in strong support of the Farm to School Grant Program in the Oregon Department of Education's budget. As the founder of Sisterhood Kitchen Collective, a commissary kitchen that opened in November 2024 centered for BIPOC women and immigrant and refugee women, and with 18 years of education experience as a teacher for 10 years, a school administrator for 8 years, and a director of School & Family Partnerships, I bring a unique perspective on the critical importance of this program.

We urge you to support funding at \$12 million, representing a modest 9% increase from current service levels. With rising costs of food, supplies, and staffing over the past few years, this increase is essential to maintain current programming levels and expand to reach more underserved communities.

While our commissary kitchen is newly established, I have witnessed firsthand the transformative impact of connecting children to the source of their food through my years in education. Our collective is actively planning to apply for Farm to School grant funding to build on these vital connections:

- As an educator, I saw children who initially rejected unfamiliar vegetables eagerly identify seasonal produce and request these foods at home after participating in farm-to-school programs, creating a positive ripple effect on family nutrition habits.
- I've observed how partnerships with local BIPOC farmers have strengthened through school contracts, allowing them to increase production and invest in necessary infrastructure. One farmer partner shared that their school contracts provided the stability needed to purchase refrigeration equipment, enabling year-round sales.
- School garden harvests integrated into cafeteria meals have reduced food waste while increasing student participation in school lunch programs by over 20% in schools where I've worked.
- Multicultural cooking demonstrations have become powerful platforms for cultural exchange, building community among diverse student populations and helping immigrant children see their food traditions valued in the educational setting.



The Sisterhood Kitchen Collective aims to expand these benefits by creating a bridge between BIPOC women food entrepreneurs, local farmers, and school communities. Our planned programming would provide culturally relevant cooking demonstrations, nutrition education, and career pathway opportunities for students while supporting economic opportunities for women of color in the food industry.

However, without adequate funding for the Farm to School Grant Program, organizations like ours cannot implement these vital programs. This past biennium, there were over \$15 million in requests for this funding, demonstrating the significant demand for these initiatives across Oregon.

I ask that you support including this grant program in the Oregon Department of Education's budget at \$12 million so this vital work can continue to support healthy kids, schools, and communities while building a more equitable and resilient local food system.

Thank you for your consideration.

Andrea Wade, Founder and Executive Director  
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