

March 18, 2025

Subject: Written Testimony in Support of HB 3568 - Seafood to Schools Act

Dear Chair Neron, Vice-Chair Dobson, Vice-Chair McIntire, and Members of the House Committee on Education,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 3568 – the Seafood to Schools Act. This bill represents a significant investment in both Oregon's fishing industry and the health and education of our children. By allocating \$800,000 toward product development and training, this initiative will ensure that more Oregon-caught seafood reaches school lunch programs across the state while also training the next generation in seafood literacy, fillet, and butchery skills.

Research consistently shows that students who are well-nourished are better able to focus, retain information, and succeed academically. Access to high-quality, nutrientrich meals, such as Oregon-caught seafood, directly supports students' cognitive development, concentration, and overall well-being. By integrating more local seafood into school meals, we are not only strengthening Oregon's fishing industry but also ensuring that students have the nourishment they need to thrive in the classroom, setting them up for future career success. Expanding seafood education and training programs in schools will also inspire more young people to pursue careers in Oregon's fishing industry, a cornerstone of our coastal economy.

Coastal communities are already working to expand infrastructure and capacity to bring more Oregon-landed seafood to both coastal and inland regions. Through these efforts, organizations such as the Oregon Coast Visitors Association and the Oregon Ocean Cluster have collaborated with the Oregon Farm to School Network to form the Seafood to Schools working group, which has already made tangible progress in increasing seafood sales to schools, coordinating culinary training, and developing recipes and educational resources tailored for child nutrition programs. HB 3568 will build upon this success, ensuring schools have the necessary training and resources to incorporate local seafood into students' lives in a sustainable and meaningful way.

This bill is an investment in Oregon's fishing industry, coastal economy, and future workforce, ensuring that students—who are tomorrow's workers and industry leaders—are well-fed, focused, and prepared to learn. We urge you to pass HB 3568 to build a healthier, more sustainable, and economically vibrant future for our state. Sincerely,

Levie Woodward

Lexie Woodward, PCED, CEcD Executive Director

