

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

Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Education
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Date March 18, 2025

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

I am testifying today in support of funding for the Farm to School Grant Program included in the Oregon Department of Education's budget at \$12 million dollars. This represents a 9% increase from the current service level. This Grant program provides 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. 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.

In 2007, I joined a magical group of food policy advocates and together we envisioned Oregon Farm to School programs across the state. At that time, very few school lunch dollars bought Oregon grown produce. Together we learned why and then we began breaking down the barriers to increase more Oregon food on all Oregon school lunch tables. Oregonians have a strong interest in agriculture, health, the the environment, economic development and anti-hunger work. The Oregon Farm to School funding touches all of these intersections of a healthy community. But switching food on the plate is not enough. Children need to deeply understand where their food comes from through hands on food, agriculture, and garden-based education.

With \$6M in Federal funding for Local Food for Schools being eliminated by the USDA, now more than ever we need to increase state funding for farm to school. I ask that you support including this grant program in the Oregon Department of Education's budget at \$12 million.

Thank you for your time and service,

Suzanne Briggs
Portland, Oregon