

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

Mar 24, 2025

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.

I personally as well as Baker SD 5J support Farm to School because it allows support to local farmers. Being in Rural Eastern Oregon it's great to see kids in the meal service lines recognize local vendors. It not only enhances meal service with Oregon grown products, but it also increases participation when students know where their products are coming from. Baker 5J Students have also benefited from Oregon-grown products, grains and meats that we would have never thought to serve before. We as a district have expanded our students' exposure to multicultural foods that have enriched their food palates as they wouldn't necessarily have access to at home. This program has built such a strong community connection and in speaking with other interested small business owners such as mom/pop owned ranches/farms that wouldn't necessarily have access to such a scale of opportunities in the community. Advocating for feeding our students and keeping Federal/Oregon funding in the Oregon borders is so important. Farm to School has built a strong local food system that directly supports our local economy. As a district we not only benefited from the Farm to School Grant but the Local Food for Schools grant. The Local Food for Schools was eliminated by the USDA, now more than ever we need to increase the state funding for farm to school as we currently lost over \$6M in federal funding by losing this grant.

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.

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