

Submitter: Angela Hedstrom
On Behalf Of: 12M for Farm to School
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

March 17, 2025

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

I am writing on behalf of Ecotrust in support of the Farm to School Grant Program funding 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.

Farm to school grant money benefits hundreds of businesses in our state. Since 2015, farm to school efforts have influenced more than 400 different Oregon farmers, ranchers, fisherman, processors, and food distributors to supply to Oregon schools. For every \$1 a school spends on local food, \$2 of economic activity is generated in our state's economy. For every job that is created because a school district is buying local food, 2.6 total jobs are created across the state.

Oregon's Farm to School Grant Program exemplifies the economic, social, and environmental benefits that can be realized when we prioritize and invest in kids, farmers, local food businesses, and communities. This state funding is more important than ever in the face of extreme federal funding cuts, including \$6 million that would have directly benefited Oregon students and food producers, with the recent elimination of the Local Food for Schools funding. Farm to school resources create direct and ripple-effect benefits for food producers, their distributors, workers across the food chain, educators, school nutrition services, children, and families.

Ecotrust's mission is to inspire fresh thinking that creates economic opportunity,

social equity, and environmental well-being. Our goal is to foster a natural model of development that creates more resilient communities, economies, and ecosystems. After nearly two decades of work on farm to school locally and nationally, we know that Oregon's Farm to School Grant Program is critical to the development of a strong regional food system that will increase resilience, while creating economic opportunity, improving land management, promoting equitable outcomes, and building pathways to better community health.

I ask that you support including this grant program in the Oregon Department of Education's budget at \$12 million.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration and for your service to this wonderful place we call home.

Sincerely,

Angela Hedstrom
Senior Manager, Community Food Systems
Portland, Oregon