



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

March 24, 2025

Co-Chairs Frederick and Levy and members of the Committee, my name is Melina Barker and I am the Director of the Oregon Farm to School Network. The Network has 1,900 community members that are primarily food producers, child nutrition professionals, and educators.

Farm to School is a national movement and Oregon has one of the longest standing programs in the nation. Oregon's Farm to School Grant Program is a suite of funding programs that supports the purchase of Oregon foods for schools and early childcare education centers; funds hands-on farm and garden educational programs; supports equipment and infrastructure for food producers; and funds technical assistance and training for the farm to school community.

I am testifying today in support of the Farm to School Equipment & Infrastructure Grant that is included in the Oregon Department of Agriculture's budget. This Grant program provides funding for food producers to access necessary equipment to meet the demands of the school marketplace. This program is based on a clearly identified gap for school-ready products available to Oregon schools. Schools and institutions have specific product needs that small and mid-sized producers are not equipped to provide, such as produce that is chopped and washed, or refrigerated. While this grant program is small, it meets this need and facilitates the success of Oregon's Farm to School Program.

Since initial funding for this grant program was approved, ODA has funded a total of \$950,000 to 24 small and mid-scale food producers. They received over \$4 million in requests. In light of this high level of demand and the recent catastrophic federal funding cuts to USDA programs that support regional food systems, this state grant program is needed now more than ever.

We are requesting that you increase allocation for this program to \$1 million this biennium.

Thank you for your time and continued support of Farm to School funding in our state.

Sincerely,
Melina Barker

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melina Barker". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.