

Submitter: Angela Hedstrom
On Behalf Of: 1M for Farm to School
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On
Natural Resources
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB5502

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

March 17, 2025

Co-Chairs Senator Frederick and Representative Levy and members of the
Committee:

I am writing on behalf of Ecotrust in support of the Farm to School Equipment and Infrastructure Grant Program in the Oregon Department of Agriculture's budget. The Farm to School Equipment and Infrastructure Grant Program provides vital funding for Oregon food producers. Since 2019, this program has been funded at \$200,000-500,000 for a total of \$950,000. Over that same time period, ODA has received over \$4M in requests -- significantly beyond the current funding level. For this reason we are requesting an increase from the current service level of \$500,000 to \$1 million in funding. Increasing this funding in the ODA budget means producers can access equipment to grow their businesses, giving schools and early childhood centers more opportunities to purchase Oregon foods and fill their menus with dietary variety, seasonal flavor, and cuisines that reflect the cultural diversity of Oregon students. This is a win-win-win for students, producers, and communities.

Ecotrust is a Portland, Oregon-based nonprofit working at the intersection of equity, the economy, and the environment for an equitable, prosperous, climate-smart future. We have supported farm to school efforts in Oregon and nationally for nearly two decades because we know these programs significantly contribute to resilient food systems. Farm to school investments create economic opportunity, improve land management, promote equitable outcomes, and build pathways to better community health. In particular, the Farm to School Equipment and Infrastructure Grant Program addresses significant barriers faced by small and mid-sized producers, including Black-, person-of-color-, woman-, veteran-, tribal- and/or Indigenous-owned and/or operated farms and businesses. The financial and technical support to scale up provided by the Program addresses the historic and current exclusion from access to land, capital, and intergenerational wealth building these producers have experienced and creates opportunities to access the consistent markets of schools, early

childhood centers, and other institutions.

In Oregon, thanks in large part to the Farm to School Grant Program, there is a significant demand from schools for diverse local products. The Farm to School Equipment and Infrastructure Grant Program addresses a significant barrier for small and mid-sized producers selling to schools and early childhood centers. Schools and early childhood centers have specific requirements for products in regards to quantities, delivery, storage, and food safety and this grant supports producers in being able to meet these requirements.

Ecotrust urges you to include the Farm to School Equipment and Infrastructure Grant Program in the ODA budget at \$1 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, OR