

Submitter: Patrick Newson

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee
On Education

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB5515

On behalf of the dozens of farmers and school districts with whom I work with directly, as well as the thousands of students served by the meal programs available in Lane, Linn, Benton, Marion, Polk, and Yamhill counties, I encourage you to support the increase in ODE funding for farm to school over the course of the next biennium. This funding is critical for the maintenance, growth, and development of systems which work to bring healthy, local food to school cafeterias around the state. Overwhelmingly, school food is understood and accepted to be an amalgam of highly-processed items, or heat-and-serve menus, which rely on corporate distribution and are guided by price due to ever-tightening budgets. In light of the federal government decision to cancel funding for the USDA "Local Food for Schools," program which would have brought \$6 million to Oregon specifically for local farm to school purchasing, it is more imperative than ever that funding continue to increase for these critical programs. Obviously, student health and well-being is paramount, and access to nutrient rich food begins to address that issue, but this funding also supports the organizing efforts and purchasing dollars that enfranchise small and mid-sized farms to provide seasonal produce to students who live in those communities. Supporting this farm to school funding signifies a multi-layered approach to food systems resilience by keeping agricultural dollars recirculating at a community level as well as offering students and young people around the state more significant and regular access to fresh, healthy, local fruits, vegetable, and proteins, and grains, instead of bottom-dollar processed food.

This is your opportunity to choose salads instead of frozen pizzas, support farmers over manufacturers, and to help to build resilient local agricultural economies rather than rely on an increasingly fragile food system.

Please support increased funding for farm to school in the ODE budget.