



Friends of Family Farmers ♦ PO Box 751 ♦ Junction City, OR 97448

503-581-7124 ♦ [www.FriendsofFamilyFarmers.org](http://www.FriendsofFamilyFarmers.org)

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

My name is Alice Morrison and I am writing today on behalf of Friends of Family Farmers. We represent more than 1,600 small and midsize, highly diversified and local market farmers across Oregon, many of whom currently or aspire to sell their fruits, vegetables and proteins through the Farm to School program.

I am writing 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.

Friends of Family Farmers supports the Farm to School program because our children deserve access to the nutritious food grown in their community. By creating dedicated pathways for schools to engage with local farms, not only do students get to have a picture of what it means to eat seasonally in our climate, they will also grow up with a greater respect and knowledge of our agricultural industry. Farms are not optional and we will always need to feed ourselves. As our population gets further concentrated in cities and fewer and fewer Americans have the space and resources to grow their own food, it is easy for children to assume that food comes from a store, not a field. The Farm to School program and the relationships it builds between farmers and school districts is crucial not only to the security of the flow of food to our schools during breakdowns in the national supply chains (like during COVID), but also provides lifelong education and respect for the origins of food in our state.

We also know that supporting local farms is good for our rural economies. This is another opportunity for them to put money directly into the farmers pocket and have it be reinvested in the community. According to a 2018 study by Rahe, et al<sup>1</sup> conducted at Oregon State University, local food producers also increase economic activity in their areas at higher rates than non-local market focused producers: "When determining the multiplier effect, which is the ripple effect of spending money in the economy, local farmers were determined to be 1.74, compared to 1.38 for non-local farmers." Enabling the local community food system to put food into the public schools is a good investment for Oregon.

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<sup>1</sup> Rahe, et al. 2018 "Economic Impact of Local Food Producers in Central Oregon"  
<https://smallfarms.oregonstate.edu/economic-impact-local-food-producers-central-oregon>

With the federal government's ability to fulfill its previous commitments to our students in question, and many tried and true programs like this under review at the national level, now is the time for Oregon to step up. We need to be investing in our own resilience, and a key component of that is making sure we are supporting ways for communities to feed themselves. Friends of Family Farmers urges you to prioritize investment in programs that will keep local food systems strong so that Oregon can take care of itself in times of disruption.

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.

Sincerely,

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

Alice Morrison  
Co-Executive Director  
Friends of Family Farmers