



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

503-581-7124 ♦ 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 on behalf of (your farm/business/organization's name) in support of the Farm to School Equipment and Infrastructure Grant Program 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.

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 al¹ 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.

The grant program at ODA to help farmers meet the processing and infrastructure needs to enter the Farm to School market is an incredibly powerful business development opportunity. When a farmer is able to scale their business for a guaranteed contract like one they could negotiate with a school district through the Farm to School purchasing program, this is an

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

opportunity for them to enter so many new markets. Not only does this grant program help farms start to sell into the school system and provide highly nutritious local food for our kids, but this same infrastructure may also allow them to scale their sales outlets up overall and sell to other institutions like restaurants, hospitals, colleges and more. By helping small farms meet the needs of this type of buyer through the Farm to School program, you will allow more of Oregon's kids to eat local food in school, reduce our reliance on global supply chains and make our farms ready to fill gaps in other everyday institutions. More local purchasing is not only good for the economy but also makes our community more resilient. We should be encouraging our farms to find as many local outlets as possible and this grant program is a wonderful example of making that happen.

Help Oregon feed itself now and in the future by investing in our small and midsize farms and their ability to reach institutional markets like the Farm to School program. I ask that you support this grant program in the Oregon Department of Agriculture's budget at \$1 million. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Alice Morrison". The signature is written in black ink and has a fluid, elegant style.

Alice Morrison
Co-Executive Director
Friends of Family Farmers