

Submitter: Taylor Starr
On Behalf Of: Farm to School
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5006

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

4/17/25

Co-Chairs Senator Lieber and Representative Sanchez and members of the Committee:

I am testifying today in support of funding for the Farm to School Grant Program included in the Oregon Department of Education and Oregon Department of Agriculture budgets. Oregon's Farm to School Programs help schools and early childhood education programs purchase Oregon-grown foods, support hands-on farm and garden education, and provide essential equipment for food producers. These programs play a vital role in building strong local food systems and improving student health.

These programs work in tandem with School Meals for All (HB 3435) to expand free breakfast and lunch to every public school. The virtuous cycle of increased meal service through free meal programs allows districts to source even more fresh, local ingredients for school meals.

We have offered farm to school programs at our small farm in the rural Applegate Valley of southern Oregon since 2002. We have witnessed first hand as a generation of kids benefited from our programs in many ways, including building skills in health and wellness and enthusiasm for life sciences and the natural world. We have also grown food for our community through farm to school programs and seen how these programs help build a strong local food system and supports our local economy. Farm to School is an amazing program benefiting farms, kids, schools and the economy. It is what makes me proudest to be an Oregonian that we have this program.

Over \$6M in Federal funding for Local Food for Schools has been eliminated by the USDA, now more than ever we need to increase state funding for farm to school

We are asking the legislature to support:

\$12M for Farm to School in the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) budget

\$1M for Farm to School in the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) budget

Fully funding HB 3435, School Meals for All

With the elimination of federal funding sources and the rising costs of food, supplies, and staffing, a modest increase in funding is crucial for the sustainability of this important program.

Taylor Starr

White Oak Farm and Education Center

Williams, OR