



**FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

April 19, 2025

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

Dear 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.

Our YMCA supports farm to school because:

- It builds skills for health and wellness in kids, adults, and communities which is also our mission
- It builds a strong local food system and supports our local economy
- It supports schools as hubs for communities especially during times of crisis such as the prior pandemic and wildfires

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.

Sincerely,

Brad Russell, *Executive Director*

**Rogue Valley Family YMCA**



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