

Submitter: Andreina Velasco  
On Behalf Of: Oregon GYO Advocacy Collective  
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On  
Capital Construction  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5204

Dear Joint Committee on Ways and Means,

I know that you have a daunting task ahead of you: balancing the budget while preserving programs that effectively serve Oregon students, families, and educators. As you head into the session, I am writing to urge you to include the Oregon Grow Your Own (GYO) grant funding in your balanced budget. Specifically, I urge you to:

- Preserve the 2nd year of GYO funding so that current participants can complete their licensure and certification programs.
- Seek long-term and sustainable funding for GYO educator pathways.

Since 2020, Oregon Grow Your Own (GYO) programs have served hundreds of aspiring educators across the state, from rural to urban communities, to advance their careers in education through state-funded tuition assistance, navigation support, student teaching aid, and summer internship opportunities. Oregon's diverse students and families deserve to see themselves represented by their local highly-qualified educator workforce, and GYO programs have been highly successful in making progress towards that vision.

For diverse perspectives on the impact of GYO from rural and urban participants, community partners, educators, and legislators, please watch the Zoom recording for the Jan 12 Oregon GYO Roundtable. Across the state, the community showed up in a big way to demonstrate the importance of this initiative - the Zoom room immediately reached capacity. You can see more video and written testimonies from GYO program participants to learn firsthand how GYO funding has provided them with an educational pathway, and how cuts to funding will jeopardize their program completion.

I am deeply concerned about the significant impact that eliminating GYO funding will have on participants in our communities who are relying on state funding to become licensed educators and serve our students. I urge you to consider them, future educators, and the Oregon students who they serve, as you balance the budget.

Thank you for taking this into careful consideration,

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