



TO: HOUSE AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE
FROM: KASANDRA GRIFFIN,
POLICY MANAGER FOR FOOD AND SCHOOL HEALTH
UPSTREAM PUBLIC HEALTH
DATE: FEBRUARY 12, 2013
RE: IN SUPPORT OF HB 2700

Please accept this written testimony in support of HB 2700.

Upstream Public Health has been advocating for Farm to School and School Garden programs since 2006. We believe that Oregon's children, farmers and processors all benefit when Oregon products are served in schools, and we are happy to say that many people agree with us.

The interest in healthy local foods that is buoying the Farm to School and School Garden movement is also inspiring a new generation of young people to want to take up farming and ranching – exciting news at a time when the average age of Oregon farmers is 57.5¹. This new generation of young people who want to become farmers and ranchers are not the children of current farmers, and they do not have land or equipment to inherit. They are trying to start from scratch, and they are coming up against a brick wall: Farm financing.

The lack of access to capital is a major barrier to new and aspiring farmers, and HB 2700 offers a simple solution. Thirty-nine other states already have specific programs for agricultural financing; Oregon needs to take advantage of the opportunity for public/private partnerships and join them. HB 2700 proposes to let private lenders access federal tax benefits to incentivize loans to beginning and expanding farmers. The state has much to gain and nothing to lose.

In 2009, I researched agricultural financing in Oregon. One 40-something farmer told me “I do not know anyone who has gotten onto land as a farmer without a major source of outside funding.” Is that the kind of state we want to be, or do we want to be one that welcomes and supports our aspiring farmers, whether or not they have a trust fund or just retired from Nike?

Please show your support for the hard-working people who feed us, and those who aspire to feed us, and pass HB 2700.

¹ U.S. Census of Agriculture, 2007. http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2007/Online_Highlights/County_Profiles/Oregon/cp99041.pdf