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Testimony in support of HB 2649, Farm to School and School Gardens
Senate Health Care, Human Services, and Rural Health Policy Committee

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Kaiser Permanente has a 65-year history and mission of improving the health of not only our members, but the communities we serve. As a total health organization we advocate for improved access to healthy food and opportunities for physical activity for all Oregonians. Expanding the Farm to School and School Garden Program is a wise investment in the health of our children, our farmers, and our communities.

Kaiser Permanente has been supporting Farm to School Programs and legislation since 2007. We are proud to have funded the 2008-2009 Ecotrust pilot through the Kaiser Permanente Community Fund at the Northwest Health Foundation. We have since supported Ecotrust in providing technical assistance to low income schools to implement farm to school programs because research suggests that children who participate in comprehensive farm to school programs consume more fruits and vegetables throughout the day. It is no secret that fruits and vegetables are critical to preventing chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes and many forms of cancer.

Not only do Farm to School programs pay for themselves through chronic disease prevention, they support local economies all across the state. Because there is a clear link between poverty and health, thriving local economies are also important to the total health of our residents and our communities.

In these challenging economic times we must continue to create the community in which we want to live. That means implementing proven programs that promote health and well being. Kaiser Permanente supports HB 2649 to expand farm to school and school garden programs.