

To: Chair Clem, and members of the House Committee on Rural Communities, Land Use, and Water

FROM: EDUCATION PERSPECTIVE

DATE: MARCH 19, 2015

RE: Written testimony in support of HB 2721-1

Dear Chair Clem, and members of the House Committee on Rural Communities, Land Use, and Water.

For the record, my name is Krina Lee, I am the Executive Director of the Salem-Keizer Education Foundation and a recent board of director on the Salem-Keizer School Board. I am here in support of HB 2721.

The Salem-Keizer Education Foundation (SKEF) has been in operation for over 30 years as the strategic partner with the Salem Keizer School District, Oregon's second largest serving 41,000 students of which nearly 70% live in poverty. SKEF is a grantee partner and facilitator of the Salem Keizer School gardens program K-12, and host the only school-based aquaponics systems in Oregon.

We know firsthand that agriculture, food and garden education has emerged as one of the most powerful and relevant ways to engage all students in next generation science standards, college and career readiness there is. Our academic programs in the gardens also expose students to post graduate opportunities and careers in alignment with Marion, Polk and Yamhill counties regional solutions priority of growing agripreneurs.

We know that healthy kids learn better. We know that kids who understand and participate in the relationship with food, agriculture and garden education have improved test scores, daily attendance and on time graduation rate.

Literally children are learning physics and engineering when they get to "dig water tunnels", what we would call irrigation systems. Students this week completing a Food Story lesson were asked "how are you going to vote with your fork." One answer was "I will eat food grown in Oregon," and "I will grow more food for myself at home."

We are a unique partner, in that we literally have one foot rooted in our schools and child development and the other foot firmly planted in the community to mutually benefit their goals. The schools, nor SKEF can engage community and industry partners alone. HB2721-1 validates the roles of those partnerships. They are critical to the success of the procurement of financial and human resources necessary to move academic achievement.

This ecosystem of community partners is essential to bridge the urban/rural divide that truly exists within the capitol's backyard

HB2721-1 does two things

It grows the vital economic contributions of Oregon's agriculture system

And more importantly, it feeds the brains AND the bellies of students.