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Education Subcommittee of Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St NE
Salem, OR 97301

June 20, 2017

Dear Co-chairs Monroe and Smith Warner and members of the Committee:

On behalf of La Grande School District, we are writing to express *our strong support for HB 2038*, the Farm to School Bill. HB 2038 maintains funding, in the form of grants administered by Oregon Department of Education, to reimburse school districts for their purchases of Oregon grown and processed foods and for food-based, agriculture-based and/or garden-based educational activities.

La Grande School District recently purchases livestock at the Eastern Oregon Livestock Show in Union, Oregon (at the floor price) for use in their food service program. These animals were raised by students of Union County and were then processed by a local USDA inspected butcher. The response of the residents of this community has been absolutely overwhelming to this program. The audience at the sale applauded loudly each time a buyer turned their animal over the district's farm to school program and I have been contacted numerous times since about how "neat" it was for our district to do this.

In addition to the above, our District has purchased salmon and shrimp from Astoria, asparagus from Nyssa, fresh picked strawberries from Hermiston, berries from the Willamette Valley and fresh grown leaf vegetables from our own CTE program (at market prices).

Without the support of the Farm to School grants, most of the above would not be possible with just the revenue generated by the sale of meals. These grants have given us the opportunity to do something different and better for kids. I accepted the grants two years ago with a high level of reluctance, but today I'm absolutely committed to the program. Everyone involved is excited about this program, this includes the kids, the kitchen staff, the growers, the general public and myself. It is truly a win-win for everyone involved!

Please support HB 2038 and help us do better things for our kids and local residents. Farm to school is one of those rare issues that connects our rural and urban citizens and enjoys bi-partisan support.

Please do all you can to preserve funding for this important program and help me capitalize on the two years of learning and work we have put into this program!

Sincerely,

Chris Panike
Business Director
La Grande School District

OPPORTUNITY & EXCELLENCE

Union County School District Number One
1305 North Willow Street
La Grande, OR 97850-1392
(541) 663-3202 Fax (541) 663-3223
www.lagrandesd.org