

February 12, 2017

**Chair Clem and Members of the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee,**

Greetings!

**I'm writing today to ask you to support HB 2038, to preserve or expand current funding levels for Oregon's Farm to School and School Garden program.** This bill will be in the House Agriculture Committee on Tuesday, February 14th.

On the Southern Oregon Coast 5 separate communities depend on Farm to School & School Garden funding, where 60%-70% of our students qualify for free/reduced lunch. Not only have we helped our school districts bring extra dollars to help with the costs of purchasing local food in our school cafeterias, but these extra dollars are also helping our family farms & businesses, like Valley Flora, Twin Creek Ranch, & Port Orford Sustainable Seafood, just to name a few.

We have so much support county-wide with many partners like OSU Extension, our school districts, and many small businesses from farms to restaurants that help our young citizens understand more about the food they eat, through Farm to School education.

Our Farm to School funding has brought to our Region a FoodCorps Member who helps support our school districts **full time**, expand school garden opportunities, offer more farm field trips, and provide school wide taste testings, and cooking classes using local foods.

We take special pride in the field trips we offer students through this Farm to School funding, like the Wahl Sheep Ranch, Scott McKenzie's Seaview cranberry bogs, Port Orford Dock, and Valley Flora Farm. These field trips offer students a window into future jobs in our agricultural industry. They also help to show how important Agriculture is to the economy of Oregon.

I have included a video that a Pacific High School student made of our fall potato harvest with middle school students from Driftwood at Valley Flora. These same students planted this whole field of potatoes in the spring before they left school for the summer. Some of these same potatoes will be purchased by the school, and the students will see them in their breakfast & lunch. <https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=leila%20cassel%20valley%20flora>. This video is a testament to how Farm to School programs reaches all disciplines of education.

I would love to share any of these opportunities our Farm to School funding has provided our Region first hand! I'm sure our students, parents, and teachers will share my enthusiasm about our local food education. Engaging our youth in fundamental life skills focusing on our historically agricultural communities is important.

Please support HB 2038, to ensure we can continue this valuable program that supports our whole community.

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