



To: House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources

From: Aaron Poplack
Oregon Fellow
FoodCorps

Date: 2/14/2017

RE: In support of HB 2038

Chair Clem and Members of the Committee,

My name is Aaron Poplack. I am a native Oregonian, and a product of Oregon's kindergarten-UofO public school system. I currently live in Portland, where I work with FoodCorps, a national service organization. I support a network of 10 FoodCorps service members who provide hands-on food, garden, and agricultural education in schools across the state, from North Powder to Gold Beach.

I am here to ask you to pass HB 2038 and continue funding for Oregon's innovative Farm to School program. I am also asking all of you to personally champion this bill in your caucuses, because I know the real fight happens in Ways and Means. So please listen to the stories you hear today, and share them with your colleagues who aren't here with us.

Farm to school programs work to get local foods into school cafeterias, to support Oregon farmers and processors, and by extension its rural communities, and to help kids develop lifelong relationships with healthy foods and Oregon agriculture.

Oregon has been supporting farm to school programs since 2007, when Chief Sponsors Representative Brian Clem and Representative Tina Kotek started working together to support healthy kids and healthy rural economies.

1. The 2007 legislature created a farm to school position in the Oregon Department of Agriculture.
2. The 2008 E-Board created a farm to school position in the Oregon Department of Education, making Oregon the FIRST state in the country to have a farm to school coordinator in both agencies.
3. The 2011 legislature created a grant program to award funds to school districts to purchase Oregon agricultural products and provide students with agriculture, food and garden-based education. The program was piloted in 2011 with \$200,000, and the 2013 the legislature expanded the successful program to \$1.2 million in grants to school districts.
4. Most recently, the 2015 Legislature added \$3.3 million in one-time funds, bringing the 2015-17 total to \$4.5M and expanding the opportunity to receive grant funds to every school district in the state.

Oregon's investment in farm to school programs has helped over 190 Oregon producers develop purchasing relationships with school food buyers, putting their foods onto the lunch trays of over 230,000 students. This investment is strengthened by grant funds that support schools in providing kids with hands-on food, garden, and agriculture-based education activities, which are proven to ensure kids eat the healthy food provided to them in school. Together, these local purchasing and education programs

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catalyze investment in Oregon's rural economy, schools, and the health of our kids. State funding is crucial for helping school districts continue to build the unique public-private partnerships with Oregon's agricultural producers and community partners that make Oregon a national leader in farm to school.

Representative Clem asked specifically for the committee to hear from farmers and kids, so that is the majority of today's testimony. We will hear from the Farm to School Program manager at the Department of Education, and then a lineup of folks that include five producers or processors, a teacher, and four students who have enjoyed the farm to school programs at their schools. Kasandra Griffin with Upstream Public Health will wrap up and field questions.

In closing, and given that today is both Valentine's Day and Oregon's birthday, I once again ask you to pass HB 2038, because there is nothing more *lovable* than a program that supports the economic viability of Oregon's farmers and the lifelong health of Oregon's kids at the same time.

Sincerely,

Aaron Poplack
FoodCorps Oregon Fellow

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