

TO: Chair Clem, and members of the House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources

FROM: Michelle Markesteyn Ratcliffe, PhD
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RE: Written testimony in support of HB 2038

Dear Chair Clem, and members of the House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources.

For the record, my name is Michelle Markesteyn Ratcliffe. I am the Vice President of Sales and Marketing at Truitt Family Foods in Salem, Oregon. I am in strong support of HB 2038.

Since 2013, Truitt Family Foods has developed an innovative line of all natural, shelf-stable hummus and white bean puree dippers most significantly for the K-12 school food market. The work the Oregon Departments of Agriculture and Education, the Legislature and community partners have done in developing the K-12 markets through the farm to school programs has transformed school lunch in Oregon, and as a result nationally.

In fact the strides in the K-12 farm to school market and simultaneous changes in the distribution system have fueled the way we think about all of our markets, and how we position ourselves within them. The strength of the K12 market at home and across the country has given us the signal we needed to create and evolve the line of healthy K12 market ready hummus and bean dips. This is a testament to the significance of a state legislative body that is supportive of farm to school, alongside the local market development activities of the state agency and partners in the public and private sectors.

For the foreseeable future, our growing line of products will be a very important part of our business, and is made tenuous by episodic grant dollars flowing in and out of school districts. Our situation is not unique. Ingredient supply chains, production practices, and distribution networks require a reliable and on-going quantity of sales. HB 2038 is a meaningful step in the right direction.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I am happy to take questions.