

February 26, 2019

Dear Chair Clem and Members of the Committee,

I am member and advocate for Oregon's Farm to School and School Garden Network since 2007. Currently, I manage an education school district's garden for emotional and behavior challenge students in Multnomah County. The 16-bed garden serves many purposes from teaching academics to practicing social skills.

I am writing to ask you to support HB 2579, which expands the funding for Oregon's Farm to School and School Garden programs. This Bill will continue to build upon our growing need for youth to understand Oregon's local food production, the urban/rural community connection, and the health of our planet.

Many of our school's students need physical activity to regulate their emotions, due to anxiety, depression, hyperactivity, or other challenges they face. We have seen garden projects transform behaviors into taking ownership of specific activities, discovering their sense of purpose, and expanding their willingness to build community around a common goal.

Our school garden also serves other schools programs in our district. Every Wednesday afternoon, rain or shine, education assistances and their high school Functional Living Skills students faithfully come to work in the garden. For one Down syndrome student, performing repetitive tasks such as planting Irises has built self-confidence and brought a great sense of satisfaction. He talks about the garden all week long.

Funding HB 2579 is an investment to engage our youth in their physical, mental, and social wellbeing. But this Bill's impact goes beyond school gardens, it generates community conversations and relationships among Oregonians who care about healthy Oregon food on Oregon school lunch tables. Oregon's Farm to School and School Garden supports Oregon gardeners, farmers and their communities. Together, we all can joyfully celebrate Oregon's bountiful harvest.

Thank you in advance for your support of Oregon Bill HB2579.

Suzanne Briggs  
Education Assistant and School Garden Manager  
Portland, Oregon