



WEST MULTNOMAH
Soil & Water Conservation District

February 26, 2019

The Honorable Brian Clem, Chair
House Committee on Agriculture and Land Use
900 Court Street NE
Salem Oregon 97301

Re: Public Testimony for HB 2579

Dear Chair Clem and Members of the Committee:

We are writing to support passage of House Bill 2579 with a “do pass” recommendation that expands, creates new provisions for and funds Oregon’s Farm to School Grant program.

The West Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District is a public service district dedicated to the conservation of soil and water resources for people, wildlife and the environment. Our service territory is that portion of Multnomah County west of the Willamette River, all of Sauvie Island including the Columbia County portion of the Island and a small portion of Washington County that lies within an area in the north Tualatin Mountains known as Bonny Slope. One of our strategic plan goals is to cultivate land stewards of all ages and key to achieving this is our work with the many school and community organizations within our District that connects kids with conservation through school and community gardens, whether for food or habitat or both.

Hands-on experiential garden and farm-based primary education leads to improved outcomes across many core curriculum subjects such as math, science and the arts. Despite this, garden and farm-based education programming has been chronically underfunded in most school districts of Oregon. Therefore, we applaud the \$8.5 million in General Fund appropriation for Oregon’s Farm to School Grant Program. This level of funding should help eliminate disparities between schools with the volunteer and fundraising resources to implement locally sourced food and school garden programs and those schools that do not have these resources, generally those schools serving lower income and underserved populations.

We also applaud the bill’s recognition that training, technical assistance and evaluation is key to achieving farm to school program goals – namely connecting kids and families to locally sourced food, promoting healthy nutritious eating and securing understanding that local food and healthy eating depends on economically viable farms and the conservation of soil and water resources.

Sincerely,

Terri Preeg Riggsby
Chair and Zone 5 Director

West Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District

cc: J. Lazo, Sauvie Island Center, West Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District Board of Directors