



Testimony in Support of Farm-to-School, HB 2579

To: House Committee on Agriculture and Land Use  
From: Whitney Ellersick, MS, RDN, Senior Director, Nutrition Services  
Subject: Statement of support for HB 2579  
Date: February 28, 2019

Portland Public Schools is submitting this letter in support of HB 2579.

As a national leader in innovative Child Nutrition Programs, Portland Public Schools (PPS) strongly supports the proposed Farm to School legislation, HB 2579, to increase purchases of Oregon foods for Oregon students. A state investment in Farm to School and School Garden programs will create lifelong supporters of Oregon agriculture while developing markets for more high quality foods from local farmers, ranchers, fishermen, regional food processors and packers.

**1. Portland Public Schools has over 12 years of experience implementing Farm to School.** In the 2006-07 school year, Farm to School purchasing was implemented district wide with our Harvest of the Month program and has been a regular feature on PPS menus ever since. Through this successful program, Portland students in all schools have been introduced to new varieties of familiar Oregon foods such as apples, berries, watermelon and pears and new foods that are less commonly served including asparagus, Brussels sprouts, parsnips, rutabagas, mushrooms, kale and winter squash. Portland's *Local Flavors* promotion features an entrée or meal of local foods including 100% grass fed beef hamburgers from Carman Ranch, hummus from Truitt Family Foods, rockfish from the ocean waters just off Astoria, and most recently hand-made tamales from Salsa Locas in Portland. Connecting growers and processors has also allowed us to expand partnerships and serve local foods more frequently. An example is Shepherd's Grain flour that is used to make everything from breakfast bars to pizza crust to 100% whole wheat

bread and rolls.

**2. An investment in Farm to School will directly benefit Oregon farmers and producers and stimulate the economy.** Portland's local purchases are currently over 40% of our total purchases. We are prepared to expand Farm to School purchasing if the additional resources are made available. Based on an earlier study of the pilot Farm to School program in Portland Public Schools and Gervais School District, every dollar spent through this type of program has a 1.86 economic multiplier. A pilot investment of \$160,000 (\$0.07 per lunch) inspired over \$1.1 million in local spending and economists traced the dollars through 401 of 409 economic sectors in Oregon. Farm to School legislation assist districts like Portland to not only sustain but to expand opportunities with local food growers and makers within Oregon. While the additional funding may not cover all costs, it does assist in making that purchase possible and the rest of the purchase uses federal monies that invest in our local economy.

**3. School gardens and Farm to School cafeteria programs create food literate, lifelong healthy eaters** through hands-on learning experiences. School gardens and Farm to School programs enhance student preferences for fruits and vegetables and help reduce food insecurity by providing nutritious school meals to the most vulnerable Oregon children.

**Portland Statistics:**

Number of school sites serving meals	90
Average daily meals served	>30,000
% of students qualifying for free or reduced meals	31%
2016-17 PPS local food/distributors spending	>\$4,900,000