



Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education  
900 Court St. NE, Salem Oregon 97301

3/5/2019

Re: Public testimony on 2019-2021 YDD Budget

Dear Chairs Frederick and McClain and Committee Members,

I am the program director of YouthSource and the Supa Fresh Youth Farm, a nonprofit youth program that works with Tigard and Tualatin Schools to operate a high school reengagement and youth workforce development and entrepreneurship program. We serve opportunity youth to help them achieve their career, education and life goals. **During the last funding cycle our program was awarded a Youth and Community grant through the Youth Development Division, or YDD, which has enabled us to vastly expand our program and quadruple the number of youth served.**

Our program has a social purpose enterprise farm business that is operated by youth participants while they are re-engaged in education and receive training and support services. Youth participate in paid work experiences at the farm, earn school credit and develop a variety of skills that lead to real employment and positive educational outcomes, including very high graduation rates, often over 90% among participants that were largely out of school when they started the program. The youth also participate in a Business Club in which they create their own small businesses and present them to judges in a Shark Tank-style project, and they have also launched the Supa Fresh Soap Company as a part of the farm social purpose enterprise, which allows the youth to learn valuable work and customer service skills, as well as learn science and math while making and selling natural soap products.

In addition to the valuable learning opportunities and hands-on educational and work experiences that these youth receive, along with supportive adults and resources to help meet their needs the youth also gain a sense of community and ownership in the program. The farm is their space--they cook, eat, play and celebrate together; they work hard as a team and have a group of positive people in their lives who will help them when things are difficult. They call the people connected to the program the FARMily because it is much more than school or work to the youth who participate--it is a little bit like home. This relationship youth have with the program and the ownership they feel for the farm that they operate creates strong bonds that help retain youth in the program, keeps them engaged in education and ensures that they will benefit from these transformative services well beyond graduation as staff helps them work on their next steps. Over 90% of youth exit the program employed and/or are enrolled in post-secondary education or training. **These services are life changing for youth and would not be possible without the support of YDD.**

Our organization has been able to provide much broader and richer services to opportunity youth, launch innovative new programming that helps youth achieve their goals and stay connected to education, and serve more youth. I cannot stress enough how important and beneficial this funding and our partnership with YDD has been for the youth in our community. **I strongly urge you to continue to give your full support of the Youth Development Division, as it is making a real and positive difference in the lives of opportunity youth and Oregon communities.**

If you would like to learn more about our program or how YDD funding has benefitted the youth and community in SE Washington County please do not hesitate to contact me or schedule a tour. **I would love to share the accomplishments of our youth and the good work we are doing to support them.**

Thank you.

Sincerely,

*Katrin Dougherty*

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