



Oregon Association of
Conservation Districts

March 2, 2019

To: House Committee on Agriculture and Land Use

haglu.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov

From: The Oregon Association of Conservation Districts

Re: Support for HB 2579 to better provide Oregon kids with local food and education about food and agriculture

To Chair Clem, Vice-Chairs McLain and Post, members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on HB 2579. I am testifying on behalf of the Oregon Association of Conservation Districts to express support for the bill. OACD serves and represents Oregon's 45 Soil and Water Conservation Districts, which are special districts governed by elected boards. The Districts protect and enhance soil quality, water quality and quantity, and habitat by supporting voluntary conservation in partnership with private landowners and managers as well as federal, state, and nonprofit partners. In addition to providing technical support to landowners and managers, Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) work with partners to provide outreach and education to their local communities.

The Farm-to-School Grant Program nourishes the next generation of stewards of our land and natural resources, with both local food and education about food and agriculture. Furthermore, hands-on garden and farm-based education leads to improved outcomes across many core curriculum subjects such as math, science, and the arts. Despite these benefits, there are disparities in funding across schools, and garden and farm-based education has been underfunded in most school districts. HB 2579 expands the program and provides it with much needed additional funding. The \$8.5 million proposed to be appropriated from the General Fund would help eliminate these disparities and ensure schools with fewer volunteer and fundraising resources are able to implement locally sourced food and educational school garden programs. The bill also calls on the Department of Education and the Department of Agriculture to provide training and support for implementation of these programs, which will strengthen the effectiveness of the program.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding HB 2579 and the importance of local food, and education about food and agriculture. We encourage you to pass HB 2579 to further support the next generation of agricultural and food experts.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anna Freitas". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Anna" and last name "Freitas" clearly distinguishable.

Anna H. Freitas
Policy and Program Manager
Oregon Association of Conservation Districts
anna.freitas@oacd.org
(831)-334-1551