

Education Subcommittee of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means

03 June 2019

Co-Chairs Frederick and McLain and Members of Committee:

I am a Registered Nurse & a graduate student at the National University of Natural Medicine in Portland, majoring in community-based nutrition with a focus in equitable food access and community-based nutrition education.

I'm writing to ask you to support HB 2579 and its most recent amendments, to expand funding for Oregon's farm to school and school garden programs. HB 2579 expands funding for schools to buy Oregon foods and for farm- and garden-based education.

Farm to school programs support students, farmers, and communities across our bountiful state. I have seen these programs make a difference in underserved communities of North Portland by introducing youth to fresh produce (sometimes, for the first time), the land it comes from, and the work it takes to prepare food from a seemingly-basic seed to the rich meals eaten multiple times per day. Oregon's Farm to School programs are a vital resource for our communities—in this time of technological advancement and overworked families, many youth do not have the opportunity to learn the reality of where our food *really* does come from, and the Farm to School education program tirelessly bridges this gap.

When children are able to experience gardening- and farm-based education there is a different respect and understanding for real food, its impact on Earth, its impact in our bodies, and its impact within our communities. These small, yet profound, changes greatly reduce the risk of chronic diseases (obesity, type-II diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and different forms of cancer) thereby increasing the health of the individual, the productivity of the community, and the wealth of our whole economy.

I hope that you're able to respect our communities' needs for this vital educational opportunity, supporting our state from within. Please do all you can to advance and fully fund HB 2579.

Thank you for the consideration and for your service. I am proud to reach out to you for your support, trusting you will recognize this great need.

Sincerely,

Eluta Watson, RN, MSN; National University of Natural Medicine; Portland, Oregon