

June 3, 2019

Education Subcommittee of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means
RE: Support for HB 2579

Dear Co-Chairs Frederick and McLain and Members of the Committee,

I am writing on behalf of Kaiser Permanente Northwest to ask you to support HB 2579 and the 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.

Kaiser Permanente has a 70-year history and mission of improving the health of not only our members, but the communities we serve. As a total health organization we advocate for improved access to healthy food and strong local economies across our region. Expanding the Farm to School and School Garden Program is a wise investment in the health of our children, our farmers, and our communities.

Kaiser Permanente has been supporting farm to school programs and legislation since 2007. We have supported local organizations and schools to implement farm to school programs because research suggests that children who participate in comprehensive farm to school programs consume more fruits and vegetables throughout the day. It is no secret that fruits and vegetables are critical to preventing chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes and many forms of cancer. Research also shows that time in the garden improves social and emotional health for many students.

Not only do Farm to School programs pay for themselves through chronic disease prevention, they support local economies across the state. Because there is a clear link between income and health, thriving local economies are also important to the total health of our residents and our communities.

Please do all you can to advance and fully fund HB 2579.

Thank you for the consideration and for your service.

Sincerely,



Molly Haynes, MPH
Director, Community Health
Kaiser Permanente Northwest