



La Grande

SCHOOL DISTRICT

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May 31, 2019

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

I am the Business Director for La Grande School and I'm writing this letter with high hopes that you will support HB 2579 and the most recent amendments made to this bill in order to expand funding for this very worthwhile cause.

Our food service program (which I manage) is under constant pressure from the community to serve healthier and more wholesome locally grown products to our students. Unfortunately, our program operates under very tight margins and the higher costs of locally grown and processed foods, along with the difficulties of establishing the supply chain, serve as a deterrent to these efforts. The farm to school program provides us both the financial opportunity and the encouragement to overcome these barriers and work directly with producers in our area.

Examples of how these funds have been used in the past by our District include the following:

- The purchase of locally grown beef and hogs from local ranchers.
- The purchase of our own student's animals at the Eastern Oregon Livestock Show (at the floor price).
- The USDA inspection and processing of these animals in nearby community of Elgin. (Stafford's)
- The purchase of fresh asparagus grown in the Vale & Nyssa area. (Owyhee Produce)
- The purchase of salmon from the Oregon Coast. (Bornstein Seafoods)
- The purchase of cold water shrimp from the Oregon Coast. (Bornstein Seafoods)
- The purchase of fresh raspberries & strawberries from the Stanfield area. (Aichele Farms)
- The purchase of garden produce grown in our own High School's Plant Science green houses.

In addition, as a new FoodCorps site for 2018/19, our District is now very anxious to participate in the educational grant portion of the Farm to School program, which would be new for us. Night time frost is common in the Grande Ronde Valley from October 1 to the middle of May, so we are hopeful that greenhouses can be procured through the grant process for placement at elementary schools, allowing those students to raise fresh produce throughout the school year, just like the high school students.

I have firsthand experience at how these funds are having a positive impact on local community as the attendees at the Eastern Oregon Livestock Show auction provided a near standing ovation when they learned our District was using these funds to purchase the student's animals for use in our food service program. The support and good feelings that existed in that arena for this program is truly beyond description! Please support the growth of this program.

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OPPORTUNITY & EXCELLENCE

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