



To: Joint Ways and Means Committee - Subcommittee on Education
From: Matt Newell-Ching, Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon
Subject: Support for Farm-to-School and School Gardens (HB 2579)
Date: June 4, 2019

Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon envisions an Oregon that is healthy, hunger-free, and thriving. Decades of research shows that kids who eat breakfast and lunch at school attend school more regularly, are more likely to graduate, and earn more in life.

Over the past year, Hunger-Free Oregon facilitated listening sessions across the state with parents and students to assess how Oregonians would like to improve school meals. Two major issues came to the forefront: access to meals, and the quality of those meals.

Hunger-Free Oregon supports HB 2579 and the most recent amendments, to expand funding for Oregon's farm to school and school garden programs.

Oregon took historic action as part of the Student Success Act, and will go further than any other state to ensure students can access meals at school. The Farm-to-School program goes beyond meal access to ensure Oregon's kids have access to high-quality food grown from Oregon. Many schools have gone beyond simply including local ingredients in meals, and have included aspects of the program into learning, including school gardens, and incorporating related themes into career-technical education.

A robust Farm-to-School program is a key ingredient in making Oregon the best place for kids to eat breakfast at lunch at school. Teaching kids about where food comes from creates an immersive learning environment, and helps address stigma sometimes associated with school meals. Investments in Farm-to-School are a testament to the belief that we should be serving meals to our kids at school for which we can be proud.

It's also a win-win. Students eat high-quality meals, and we support Oregon's farmers. This strengthens classrooms and communities across Oregon.

We urge the committee and the legislature to pass and fully-fund HB 2579.