

Education Subcommittee of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means

Date

Co-Chairs Frederick and McLain and Members of Committee:

I am a farm educator with Rogue Valley Farm to School.

My background is as a chef, baker and a CASA volunteer with foster children.

I'm writing to ask you to support HB 2579, 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. I have seen these programs make a difference first-hand. Here are some of the benefits I have witnessed.

The children who learn with a school garden and garden educator are advanced beyond their peers in tangible and powerful ways.

They are in possession of tremendous knowledge: from sowing to harvesting, to preparing the harvest for meals to enjoy.

They have an intimate understanding of pollinators and how important they are to food systems.

They are familiar with the roles sun, water and soil play in the lives of plants.

They can tell you about how a seed begins and grows and becomes a seed again.

Their awareness and observations are heightened, noticing bird-song, bee swarm, wild plant to cultivated row.

They are learning about the fundamentals of life on earth and the farmers mission in promoting life for healthy communities.

Their experience in the farm/garden classroom is positive and beneficial; they are more engaged and feel more able to express themselves in an interactive outdoor environment.

These kids are making some of the best food I have eaten in my 2 decades working in hospitality! And they are making food that has a positive benefit to their health, learning and focus.

The farm to school program is giving farms and food a future in the lives of kids who will become our leaders.

The impact it is having on young lives is advantageous to our society to the utmost degree.

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

Thank you for the consideration and for your service.

Deanna Waters Senf,

Rogue Valley Farm 2 School, Eagle Point , OR.