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June 4, 2019

Co-Chairs Frederick and McLain and Members of Committee,

I am the Director of the "Youth Grow" program at Growing Gardens and am writing to you because we work at a school in your district. On behalf of Growing Gardens, I'm writing to express our strong support for HB 2579, Oregon's Farm to School Bill. HB 2579 expands funding for schools to buy Oregon foods and for farm- and garden-based education. The Bill requests the renewal of \$4.5 million and an additional \$.5 million, for a total of \$5 million, and expands the ODE Farm to School Grant program to include funding for early childcare and education (preschool), summer lunch, technical assistance and program evaluation.

Our program has benefitted from the Farm to School education grant, in two funding rounds, so I have directly seen the benefits of this this legislation. Each year we educate nearly 3000 students at low income schools, using school gardens as a living classroom. We teach hands-on science, ecology and nutrition lessons while highlighting locally-grown fruits and vegetables.

For example, a few weeks ago Growing Gardens and FoodCorps passed out shredded red and golden beets at Scott School in NE Portland. We highlighted the roasted Farm-to-School beets on the lunch line and showed kids bunches of uncut beets with their leafy greens. When asked what they were, kids guessed, "Lettuce?", "Carrots?", "Radishes"? "Potatoes?" After trying the shredded beets, most kids gave them a thumbs up. In fact, one boy said it was "One thousand thumbs up!" Other students commented, "This would go good with salad, can I go get some salad?", "I love your shredded beets!", "Beets taste good on pizza," and "Golden beets are the bomb!"

As any parent or teacher can attest, getting children excited about eating healthy food is equally as important as having it on the lunch line. Thank you for considering expanding Farm to School and School Garden programs which benefit public health, enrich education, build community and strengthen Oregon's economy. Thank you for fully supporting HB 2579.

Sincerely,

Anna Garwood
Growing Gardens

We help people grow their own food!

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