

Tri-Chairs Johnson, Steiner-Hayward and Rayfield and members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means:

My name is Gia Saporito and I am testifying on behalf of Yamhill Carlton School District, where I am the Director of Nutrition Services, to ask you to restore funding for the Oregon Farm to School Grant Program.

A little bit about our district, we are very small, located in rural Yamhill County and many of our district's families are members of the farming community. So, Farm to School Grants have allowed my school district to connect with our student's families and neighbors to purchase healthy, local foods that we wouldn't normally be able to provide. And our students aren't the only ones benefiting, our community's small business economy is boosted because we reinvest federal grant money on a local level.

Another benefit that we've seen is the sense of community pride and recognition on the student's and parent's faces when they see for example that we are featuring Carlton Farm ham roasts for our Christmas meal. Another example is Fruithill Inc, a cherry orchard, a couple blocks away from my office on campus. We serve their cherries during summer months and often the cherries are harvested in the morning and served to our students at lunch time. You just can't beat that level of quality and connection to the community, and those connections, those stories are happening all over the state, because of the Farm to School Grant Program. So please do all you can to restore the 15 million dollars in funding for the Oregon Farm to School Grant Program. Our students, our communities and our farmers; we all only benefit from this program. Thank you all for your consideration and time.