

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

My name is Rachel Pettit and I am testifying on behalf of Food Roots, a non-profit organization working throughout Tillamook County, to ask you to restore funding for the Oregon Farm to School Grant Program.

Farm to School Grants provide funding for schools to purchase healthy, local foods and provide farm and garden based education. These grants leverage and keep millions of federal dollars in Oregon, support local farmers, and bring people of all ages closer to Oregon agriculture.

This program has directly benefited Tillamook County and the north coast region by providing tens of thousands of dollars for school districts to purchase ground beef, fresh produce like salad mix, radishes, zucchini and tomatoes (that're often harvested merely hours before delivery), and other products directly from the hardworking people who grow them. When schools in your district use their farm to school funds to buy local food, they invest in the farms, ranches, fisheries and other small businesses so integral to the resilience and economic success of the rural regions you represent.

The grant also benefits hundreds of students in Tillamook County by providing hands-on educational activities that support science literacy, social and emotional wellbeing, and academic behavior. Tastings of local food, field trips to local farms, and farmers visiting classrooms and cafeterias are farm to school activities that encourage families to choose to eat more Oregon grown fruit and vegetables at school and at home. And when families choose to make these household level investments in local farms, ranches, fisheries and other small businesses owned and operated by their neighbors, they're also choosing to more deeply invest in the rural communities where they work, live and play.

Please do all you can to restore funding for the Oregon Farm to School Grant Program to the levels of the last biennium, which was \$15 million. Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony.