

Testimony in favor of HB 5017

Co-Chairs Senator Frederick and Representative McLain and members of the Committee

I am writing on behalf of *Southern Oregon Food Solutions* in support of the Farm to School Grant Program in the Oregon Department of Education's budget.

This Grant program provides:

- critical funding for schools and early childhood education programs to purchase Oregon foods,
- hands-on farm and garden education programs,
- equipment and infrastructure for food producers, and
- technical assistance for the farm to school community.

Sustaining the current level of \$10.2 million dollars will support dependable business relationships between schools and food producers and maintain consistent educational programs that connect students to agriculture and nutrition

*Members of our group are collaborating with Ashland's Bellview Grange #759 and Bellview Elementary School to construct an educational demonstration food forest to be used as a teaching resource.*

As a group interested in education around food, food waste, regenerative agriculture and having a stronger connection to where our food comes from,

We support this grant program because....

- It builds skills for wellness and health in kids and communities
- It builds a strong local food system and supports our local economy
- Supports schools as hubs for communities especially during times of crisis such as wildfires and pandemic
- Stronger connections to our surrounding farms results in increased economic resiliency
- Education about food and agriculture is essential to valuing food as a precious gift

I ask that you support including this grant program in the Oregon Department of Education's budget at the current level of \$10.2 million so this program can continue to support healthy kids, schools and communities. Thank you for your time.

*Flavia Franco*

*Member of Southern Oregon Food Solutions*

*Ashland, OR*

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