

Submitter: Lola Milholland

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Education

Measure: HB5014

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

My name is Lola Milholland, and I am CEO and co-founder of Umi Organic. We make organic noodles and sauces in Portland using Oregon-grown ingredients. Since 2019, we've been selling our whole grain yakisoba noodles to public schools around Oregon, from Portland to Ashland to Bend and beyond. It's the honor of my lifetime that I get to make food that kids love that reaches all kids no matter their income and that supports Oregon farmers directly. The first day our noodles were served in Portland Public Schools, kids chanted "ya-ki-so-ba!" It was the proudest day of my life.

None of this would be possible without the Farm to School Grant Program in the Oregon Department of Education's budget. Public schools operate on a meager budget that makes it impossible for them to buy local products with any consistency. Farm to school changes that! It makes it possible for them to regularly menu foods grown and produced by local companies—foods that are healthy and delicious that kids love.

In some ways, \$10.2 million is a large investment by the state. But I see as an economic engine that circulates, enriching many aspects of our communities and economy. The money we receive for the noodles we give to Portland workers and also Oregon grain millers and farmers. This money doesn't depart to someplace else. It makes the very communities where kids are going to school more stable, dynamic, and economically viable. The relationships I've built with school food directors give my work meaning. And my business is more secure and diverse because of the business I do with schools. It would be devastating to so many local businesses if this funding were to shrink. It would also make school lunch in our state less connected to communities and less nutritious.

Please maintain the current \$10.2 million funding for farm to school in the Oregon Department of Education's budget. This money is put into immediate and meaningful action in our communities. It's such a win-win-win—for businesses, for our environment, and for kids! Please don't step away from something so valuable and good.

Thank you for your time.

Lola Milholland  
Umi Organic  
Portland, Oregon