

Submitter: Kai Neuenschwander

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Education

Measure: HB5014

3/21/2023

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

I am writing on behalf of Friends of Zenger Farm 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.

As a farm educator, I am directly involved every day with the immense task of educating our future generations about our food system. This work feels immensely valuable to me as I see it as a key role in supporting children's wellbeing, social and environmental awareness, and connection to nature. As our society continues to adapt to the climate crisis, teaching children valuable ways to engage in our local food systems will be crucial to our collective wellbeing. From my experience as an educator, I support this grant program because it help support the hands-on labor that communities across Oregon are already doing and will continue to do, in an equitable funded, and financially sustainable manner. This support will help us continue to build a strong local food system and support our local economy.

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.