

Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Education
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Brynn Richardson on behalf of Eugene School District 4J

200 N Monroe St

Eugene, OR 97402

March 21, 2023

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

I am writing you today in support of the Oregon Farm to School Grant Program in the Oregon Department of Education's annual budget. The funds from this grant program are critical to supporting local foods in our schools and early childhood education programs. Additionally, funding from these grant programs also support hands on learning programs in gardening and farming. Ensuring that the current \$10.2 million budget for Farm to Schools remains intact, is vital for Oregon educational institutions to continue to support local growers, producers and food manufactures and to keep impactful STEM curriculum surrounding food, nutrition and agriculture in our classrooms.

Here at Eugene School District 4J we've primarily utilized our Farm to School dollars to support local farmers and producers. Last year we were able to work with a fledgling plum grower in Vida. His property had been heavily damaged by the Holliday Farm fire, yet his plum orchard was still intact. We were able to purchase his entire crop of plums for last season (2022) guaranteeing him an income from his crop. Through our Lane County Farm to School Hub coordinator Patrick Newsome, we've been able to work with a multitude of Lane County farmers. This fall we served Riverbend Farms Asian pears in all our schools for 3 weeks. We purchased a variety of produce from Upriver Farms and Camas Swale Farms as well. Working with Patrick, we've established produce projections that he has shared with interested growers, giving growers some security that their crops will be fully utilized. Our District is also in the process of transitioning from a commercially produced hamburger patty, towards a High Desert Grass Fed Beef, a 100% Oregon operated beef cattle program. Additionally, we've been able to support small, businesses such as Miffy's Foods, Umi Organic and De Casa Fine Foods.

As a District, we at Eugene School District 4J choose to support Oregon Farm to Schools Programs because:

- It is a cornerstone of supporting small businesses and farmers in our state
- It promotes a focus on locality and sustainability in our classrooms and community
- It presents cafeteria based educational opportunities in wellness, agriculture and food awareness

We 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.

Brynn Richardson

Eugene School District 4J, Eugene Oregon