

Submitter: Kelley Smith

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Education

Measure: HB5014

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

3/22/2023

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

I am writing on behalf of Growing Gardens 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

I have been a garden educator with Growing Gardens for the past 4 years, 2 of which were under FoodCorps. At one school, I've taught over 300 daytime, afterschool, and summer school lessons since I started there with about 70% of the students seeing me for more than 1 year. I have done 11 cafeteria tastings plus many in class tastings when there is time in the garden. The continued support of funding has allowed my school the chance to experience a sense of adventure and connection, not just with nature but with each other. This funding has allowed students to try and experience things that they might not have a chance to at home and get to share it with those at home. The students have felt more comfortable over the years expressing their likes and dislikes, more open to trying things that they normally wouldn't in a safe space, and experimenting with flavor combinations they might not have heard of without the program. I have had so many students running up to me asking what our next tasting will be, for old tasting recipes, when our next lesson will be, and for any seed packets they can take home to share with their loved ones.

As an educator, I support this grant program because it builds skills for wellness and health in kids and communities.

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.

Kelley Smith
Growing Gardens
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