

Submitter: Wisteria Stuart
On Behalf Of: 12 Million for Farm to School
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee
On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB5515

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

March 10, 2025

Co-Chairs Senator Sollman and Representative Ruiz and members of the Committee

I am writing on behalf of Grow Portland, a small non-profit that provides school garden education for 16 elementary schools across two districts in Portland, Oregon. I am writing 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 (like ours), and technical assistance for the farm to school community. We are requesting funding at \$12 million which represents a modest 9% increase from current service level. This past biennium, there were over \$15 million dollars of requests for this funding. With increases in costs of food, supplies and staffing over the past few years, this modest increase is needed simply to maintain the current level of programming. This funding will support dependable business relationships between schools and food producers and maintain consistent educational programs that connect students to agriculture and nutrition.

As an organization that provides direct service in the form of outdoor, garden based food and farming education to 6500 students each month September through June, this funding is critical to our mission of helping kids form positive relationships with food, farming and nutrition.

I support this grant program because
It builds skills for wellness and health in kids and communities
It instills values and knowledge of healthy behaviors which combat the worse of the obesity and diabetes epidemic
It builds a strong local food system and supports our local economy
It gets fresh local, oregon grown produce into schools
It helps make the connection for why Oregon farms and farmers matter
Supports schools as hubs for communities especially during times of crisis such as wildfires and pandemic

I ask that you support including this grant program in the Oregon Department of Education's budget at \$12 million so this program can continue to support healthy kids, schools and communities. Thank you for your time.

Wisteria Stuart
Executive Director, Grow Portland
Portland, Oregon