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

Attention: Co-Chairs Senator Frederick and Representative Levy, and Members of the Committee

I am writing on behalf of Rural Roots Ranch to express my strong support for the Farm to School Equipment and Infrastructure Grant Program within the Oregon Department of Agriculture's budget. This program is critical in helping local food producers access the necessary equipment to meet the needs of school meal programs.

At Rural Roots Ranch, we raise pastured pork and grow produce in Harney County. In the fall of 2024, we had our first opportunity to work with the Farm to School Program when a small, rural school in Eastern Oregon purchased our pastured pork. This year, we hope to expand and serve even more schools in our rural communities.

As a family-run farm in operation for seven years, we face a common challenge among small and mid-sized producers: the inability to invest in necessary equipment due to financial constraints. Without this infrastructure, scaling up to meet school demand is difficult. The Farm to School Equipment and Infrastructure Grant helps bridge this gap, ensuring that local producers can continue supplying fresh, high-quality food to Oregon schools.

I urge you to support this grant program in the Oregon Department of Agriculture's budget at \$1 million. Thank you for your time and for your commitment to strengthening local food systems.

Warmly,

Cherins

Christina Keerins
Rural Roots Ranch