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Joint Committee On Ways and Means

Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

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Co-Chairs Senator Lieber and Representative Sanchez and members of the Committee

I am testifying today in support of funding for the Farm to School Grant Program included in the Oregon Department of Education and Oregon Department of Agriculture budgets. Oregon's Farm to School Programs help schools and early childhood education programs purchase Oregon-grown foods, support hands-on farm and garden education, and provide essential equipment for food producers. These programs play a vital role in building strong local food systems and improving student health. I'm proud to live in a state that has long been at the forefront of these initiatives.

These programs work in tandem with increased access to CEP and School Meals for All (HB 3435) to expand free breakfast and lunch to every public school. The virtuous cycle of increased meal service through free meal programs allows districts to source even more fresh, local ingredients for school meals.

I support farm to school and our community has benefited from this grant program because it not only builds skills for wellness and health in kids and communities, but it helps build a strong local food system and supports our local agriculture and economy. Recently, over \$6M in Federal funding for Local Food for Schools has been eliminated by the USDA. Now more than ever we need to increase state funding for farm to school initiatives. These grants also support our public schools and child nutrition programs, which can be called upon by communities, especially during times of crisis such as wildfires and pandemic

We are asking the legislature to support:

\$12M for Farm to School in the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) budget

\$1M for Farm to School in the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) budget

Fully funding HB 3435, School Meals for All

With the elimination of federal funding sources and the rising costs of food, supplies, and wages, a modest increase in funding is crucial for the sustainability of this important program.

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