

Prairie City Farm to School Program  
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## Oregon State Legislature

Salem, OR

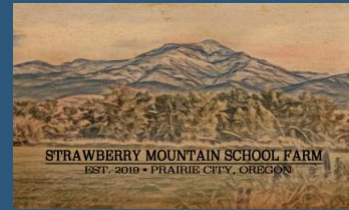
To Whom It May Concern,

I am the Farm to School Program coordinator at Prairie City School District 4, located in rural Eastern Oregon. I have not held this position long, but am very aware of the impact my program has in our area. Our primary and secondary agricultural programs are intrinsic to school identity and school culture. Through the Farm to School Program we affect local communities and local economies that span throughout multiple counties.

Here at Prairie City School we are blessed with facilities which accommodate growing a school garden and student-based raising of livestock species that will eventually be served to our students through the cafeteria. Synthesizing campus amenities with state funded programs, Prairie City School District is able to source many products from hyper-local producers as well. All of these local producers are family operated, small businesses who count on orders from schools like Prairie City School District to maintain their livelihood.

Facing looming funding cuts is an uncomfortable position to be in. My program has several forward order contracts with hyper-local producers I may not have the means to purchase since the local procurements I handle are directly tied with the Farm to CNP programs. Prairie City School District may be a small K-12 school, but rest assured we try to support our community as best we can with making every dollar spent in our community count.

Furthermore, any diversification of the producer network for the Prairie City Farm to School Program has been temporarily put on hold. This drastically impacts potential new producers I have been nurturing relationships with. Funding cuts would prevent the Farm to School Program from purchasing goods grown or raised by operations that fall under the "New and Diverse Producers" classification set by the



Oregon Department of Education. Prairie City School District had planned to purchase products from two women-owned businesses with one also being a disabled farmer. Another new producer who is classified as an emerging small business and as a beginning farmer will also be affected by any state level funding cuts due to our arranged forward order contract which is now in jeopardy.

The importance of the Farm to School movement is insurmountable. The Prairie City Farm to School Program had been on track to reach producers in the counties of Grant, Baker, Harney, and Umatilla in 2025. With decreased product procurement funding from ODE that goal will not be reached and local product procurement as a whole for our small school may disappear. If a small school district such as Prairie City School can influence local businesses and economies spanning multiple counties in Eastern Oregon through the Farm to School Program, larger inter-city schools should have a larger influential footprint doing the same.

The greatest impact achieved through Farm to School is attained by nourishing Oregon students with locally grown, healthful products served at school. Mindfully purchasing Oregon products with the students' health, welfare, and academic success in mind is an aspiration every school district, in every state should prioritize. Legislature should be embracing programming such as Farm to School and nurturing the cycle of support observed in the program. Beneficial programming boasting student support, local business support, as well as support of our state's economy should not be jeopardized. I urge all those involved to consider the potential detriment our school system, our state will face if funding cuts for Farm to School come to fruition.

Sincerely,

*Laura Brown*

Prairie City School District #4

Farm to School Program Coordinator

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