

Submitter: Zoe I Bradbury DeSurra
On Behalf Of: Farm to School
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5006

April 10, 2025

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.

These programs work in tandem with 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 have been a strong supporter of farm to school and have benefited from this grant program in significant ways:

-Since 2008 we have hosted hundreds of school field trips at our farm and provided in-class education with local schools. These experiences help connect kids to their food and develop an understanding of seasonality, crop diversity, ecological farming, soil biology, and plant science. It also gives kids a chance to taste homegrown produce bursting with flavor (and nutrition). We've converted many a kid to loving fennel, beets, and other "unusual" vegetables like kohlrabi, romanesco cauliflower, and more. It's incredibly rewarding to watch a skeptical kid's face light up when they taste something new straight out of the field.

-We sell product into the local schools, adding fresh, seasonal produce to the salad bars and helping kids connect the dots between the field and the cafeteria. This has been a great market that has further diversified our sales channels.

-We were awarded an ODA Farm to School Producer Grant last year to help improve production and post-harvest efficiency so that we could offer product to schools at a lower price point. The investments in new equipment that we made with this grant have helped us level up our operation in ways that would never have been possible without grant support and boosted our access to schools.

-Over \$6 million in Federal funding for Local Food for Schools has been eliminated by

the USDA and now more than ever we need to increase state funding for farm to school.

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 staffing, a modest increase in funding is crucial for the sustainability of this important program.

Please support Farm to School and fully fund it for the sake of kids, farmers and communities around Oregon.

Thank you!

Zoë Bradbury Desurra
Valley Flora
Langlois, OR