

Submitter: Carrie Caselton Lowe
On Behalf Of: Farm to School
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5006

Greetings Co-Chairs Lieber and Sanchez and Members of the Committee,

My name is Carrie Caselton Lowe. I am from La Grande OR. I support HB 5006.

As a regional coordinator for the Oregon Farm to School Network, I provide Farm to School services related to education outreach, technical assistance, and professional development for local educators. For example, this winter I've had the wonderful opportunity to do a series of workshops with HeadStart teachers to support their work around incorporating food and outdoor garden learning with their early learners. I have a colleague, Kristy Athens, who does similar work, but related to supply chains - getting local food from producers into cafeterias and into the kids' bellies.

I'm here to share that Eastern Oregon students do not have access to Farm to School programming like other parts of the state and the country - despite living within a robust agricultural region. Other regions have organizations providing farm to school services for schools. We don't have those organizations here.

Don't get me wrong, there are excellent farm to school efforts happening regionally. We have some of the finest FFA programs in the nation, but students outside of farming and ranching families do not tend to take part in FFA. Also, some passionate local food service directors, farmers, and teachers are doing their best to get local food into the bellies of our kiddos and teach them about growing food. In practice, this means these passionate individuals are carrying out Farm to School efforts in addition to their already full workloads. This is not sustainable, and farm to school efforts end, when people burn out or leave their positions

This boom bust cycle is due to the fact that there are not dedicated farm to school positions in this region whose jobs are focused on food and farm education and getting local food into cafeterias for the greater student population. Simply put, the majority of Eastern Oregon, despite all the of the agriculture that surrounds us, youth are not in learning spaces that elevate food, farming and garden education. Our region needs more resources, not less, to get more youth connected 1) the food that nourishes them, 2) the people who cultivate the food and whose livelihoods depend on agriculture, 3) and the land and water that grow our food.

With this in mind, the Oregon Farm to School Network is asking the Oregon legislature to fund \$12M for Farm to School in ODE's budget and \$1M for Farm to School in ODA's budget. With elimination of federal funding sources and increases in costs of food, supplies and staffing over the past few years, we need this modest

increase in funding for this important program to get more Eastern Oregon kids connected to farms and food.

Thank you for your time, and I'm happy to discuss further with anyone who is interested.

Sincerely,
Carrie Caselton Lowe