

Anna Barsotti
Testimony for HB 5006
In Support

Oregon's Farm to School programs play a vital role in building strong local food systems and improving student health. The increased physical and mental wellness I have witnessed in my role as a School Garden Coordinator at a middle school truly is only possible with the funding we received to build a school garden and create dynamic, relevant curriculum. The learning is not only about horticulture and farming, but begins to feed the curiosity and interest that will bridge with our middle school students as they move on to existing high school programs. Our students are a testament to what this critical funding translates into, and I can tell you that the experiences they have had as a direct result of this funding has positively impacted their lives.

These programs work in tandem with Oregon's push to expand free breakfast and lunch to every public school, HB 3435. 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, an increase in funding is crucial for the sustainability of this important program. There is little more impactful than investing in the health and wellness of our young people, who will go on to lead and serve our larger communities.

Thank you.