



April 14, 2025

Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

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 support this grant program because it builds skills for wellness and health in kids and communities and builds a strong local food system that supports our local economy. 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

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.

Sincerely,

Philip Yates, Board Member, Rogue Valley Farm to School