

Submitter: Melissa Flanagan  
On Behalf Of: Farm to School  
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5006

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 farm to school because as a third grade teacher, I have seen the benefits to my own child as well as my students through the program. Our students get access to local produce that they might not have access to otherwise. They get to try new fruits and vegetables at tasting tables and during garden class and the joy of cooking with fresh produce (that they harvested!) at the farm to school field trips. They have an increased interest in where their food comes from and how gardens work.

I also support this grant program because it helps build a strong local food system and supports our local economy and farmers. It also supports children's learning by expanding free breakfast and lunches. Students aren't hungry so they are able to focus instead on learning.

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.

Melissa Flanagan  
Talent, OR