

TO: Chair Clem, and members of the House Committee on Rural Communities, Land Use, and Water

FROM: Molly McCargar  
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RE: Written testimony in support of HB 2721-1

Dear Chair Clem, and members of the House Committee on Rural Communities, Land Use, and Water, my name is Molly McCargar. I am a 4th generation farmer at Pearmine Farms. Our family has been farming in the area for over 100 years and nearly 80 on our family farm in Gervais, Oregon. I'm a mom to four girls, a former educator and currently the Gervais School District Board of Directors Vice-Chair. I am here in strong support of HB 2721-1.

We farm approximately 1200 acres of vegetable row crops, grass seed, wheat, strawberries, sweet cherries and now hops. This season we'll grow roughly 500 acres of contracted vegetables for NORPAC, the largest farmer co-operative in the Northwest with over 240 Willamette Valley family farmers, who process vegetables right here in Salem.

Our farm participates in several programs including Adopt A Farmer. This volunteer program is designed to help 6th, 7th and 8th grade science students better understand how agriculture works by pairing them with a farmer or rancher for the entire academic year. I have been fortunate enough to be paired with Rachel Carson Environmental School, located in Five Oaks Middle School in Beaverton, where I have had the opportunity to go into the classroom and bring all 180 students to our farm over 8 different trips, in an effort to share how science and math play such a critical role in virtually every decision we make.

It's extremely important for Oregon kids, especially those who come from urban areas, to make the connection to where their food comes from and to appreciate all the factors and risk that go into producing it. When kids see the food grown on the farm or in their school garden, and then they see it on lunch they have a different appreciation for the food. They are more likely to eat it in school and to buy it as adults. And we see that kids who participate in the education and school garden components of farm to school, tend get their parents to notice Oregon agricultural products more.

A dad of a 6<sup>th</sup> grade daughter, had been on the trip this fall and again this last week. We were having a conversation and he said, "thank you, this is the greatest thing. This gives me a new perspective on farming and all the decisions you have to make. I just want you to know that this program has changed our buying habits and how we cook. When we go

to the grocery store we will look canned and frozen products because, and we cook with that. And it's a big deal because I was a professional chef for 15 years, and for me to cook with canned and frozen foods is a big deal. My daughter telling me about it, and me coming to the field trips solidified it for me." This is one story, and it happens all the time. The more we can get kids and families to know about Oregon agriculture the better. HB 2721-1 does this.

Programs like this are especially important to our farm and its future because these kids ARE the future. The future consumer, policy maker, accountant, banker, truck driver, restaurant owner and hopefully we inspire the next plant breeders, entomologist, engineer, or truck driver. Not everyone can be a farmer, but so many folks can help farmers.

As a parent, a school board member, a farmer, I am asking you to support an expansion of the Farm to School program. Farm to School is an important investment in our kids, our farmers, our processors, and both our rural and urban Oregon communities.

For all these reasons HB 2721-1 is a great bill for Oregon's farmers and Oregon's kids now and into the future.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, I am happy to answer any questions you may have.