

TO: Chair Clem, and members of the House Committee on Rural
Communities, Land Use, and Water
FROM: Kim Hanson, Food Systems Project Manager
Marion-Polk Food Share
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Phone: 503-581-3855, ext. 322
DATE: March 19, 2015
RE: Written testimony in support of HB 2721

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

For the record, my name is Kim Hanson and I am the Food Systems Project Manager at Marion-Polk Food Share. I have worked for over 10 years with Marion-Polk Food Share, the regional food bank serving Marion and Polk counties, and for nearly 20 years in the hunger-relief arena strengthening community food systems and increasing access for low-income people to fresh, healthy, locally grown food. Part of my work at Marion-Polk Food Share is now focused on supporting and expanding Farm to School efforts in the Mid-Valley. As a community partner, I supported Salem-Keizer School District's successful Farm to School grant application and I currently co-lead quarterly Salem-Keizer Farm to School meetings. I am also the Mom to a 4th and 6th grader who I can proudly say know way too much about kale.

Marion-Polk Food Share envisions an Oregon where all children, families, and individuals have an opportunity to be hunger-free, healthy, and thriving, so they can succeed in school, work, and life. In a seminal report that you may have seen entitled, "Ending Hunger Before It Begins: Oregon's Call to Action 2010-15, Partners for a Hunger Free Oregon (and the many communities who gave input to the report) identified cultivating strong regional food systems in Oregon as one of three main goals to help prevent and solve hunger. At Marion-Polk Food Share, we have taken this effort to heart and are working in multiple ways to strengthen the regional food system. From working with Farmers Ending Hunger, Norpac, Salem Harvest and individual farmers to source local product for our emergency food distribution program, to the 53 community and youth gardens we support across our two county area, to our Farm to School efforts, we believe that supporting local agriculture and increasing access to fresh, locally grown food are two key aspects of decreasing hunger and increasing community food security.

I am here today to affirm Marion-Polk Food Share's support for HB 2721-1 and the suggested amendments. We applaud the change to non-competitive grants for school food purchase because this will make it possible for smaller rural districts in Marion and Polk counties, and across Oregon, to access the program and support their local farmers.

We also applaud maintaining a competitive grant process for the educational portion of the program. From my own experience in Salem-Keizer, I saw the challenges of the district trying to manage both the procurement and educational aspects of the grant.

Broadening applicants to include nonprofits and commodity commissions will ease management and strengthen impact.

We also affirm the increase in overall funding for the Farm to School and School Garden grant program. The increase to \$5.6 million will allow us to scale-up the positive impacts of Farm to School across Oregon—reaching many more than the 19 districts who participated last biennium.

I ask the committee today to recognize the immense value of Farm to School for our state and to move HB 2721-1 on to Ways and Means with your full support. Thank you very much for the opportunity to testify before you today.