

Dear Chair Clem, and members of Committee,

My name is Megan Kemple. I serve as Oregon State Lead for the National Farm to School Network. I am based in Eugene, Oregon. I am here in support of HB 2721 with the Dash-One amendments.

I provide technical assistance and support to farm to school programs throughout Oregon. I also represent the Oregon Farm to School and School Garden Network, made up of over 500 stakeholders.

I'm here to give you an introduction to farm to school in Oregon and the other testimony you're going to hear today.

Farm to school programs work to get local food into school cafeterias, to support local farmers and processors, and provide kids with healthy foods. The efforts to bring Oregon foods into the cafeteria work best when supplemented with agriculture, food, and garden-based education activities that get kids excited about these foods. Together, these local purchasing and educational programs can support rural economies, provide kids with healthy foods and help them develop healthier eating habits in the long term. Overall, farm to school is good for kids, schools, and farmers.

Oregon has been supporting farm to school programs since 2007, when Chief Sponsors Representative Brian Clem and Representative Tina Kotek started working together to support healthy kids and healthy rural economies.

1. The 2007 legislature created a farm to school position in the Oregon Department of Agriculture.
2. The 2008 E-Board created a farm to school position in the Oregon Department of Education, making Oregon the FIRST state in the country to have a farm to school coordinator in both agencies.
3. The 2011 legislature created a grant program to award funds to school districts to purchase Oregon agricultural products and provide students with agriculture, food and garden-based education. The program was piloted in 2011 with \$200,000, and the 2013 legislature expanded the successful program to \$1.2 million in grants to school districts.

Today you will hear testimony to expand and amend the current farm to school and school garden program. The four amendments are as follows:

1. In order for all schools to have equal access, 2721-1 changes the competitive grant program to a "non-competitive grant" that would give all schools a

share of the funds for buying Oregon products. This will provide more opportunities for small rural districts to participate and allow them to count on the funds on an ongoing basis. Food producers also need this stability. Districts will still need to opt in to this program and track and report on their Oregon food purchases.

2. In the current grant program, any products purchased with grant funds can only be used during lunch. HB 2721-1 would permit schools to use the funds for any of the school meal programs.
3. HB 2721-1 would separate the funding for “food, agriculture, and garden-based education” from funds available to purchase Oregon foods, and continue to use competitive grants to award the education funds. It would also allow non-profit organizations and commodity commissions to apply for the education funds, as well as school districts. Many non-profit partners already provide those services, but can’t receive funding directly.
4. Finally, HB 2721-1 increases the total funding for this successful program. Specifically, it provides 5 cents per lunch served for a total of \$4.5 million in food funding. Evaluations indicate an ideal farm to school allocation of 15 cents per meal, but that 5 cents per meal is a meaningful start for both schools and producers. HB 2721-1 would also allocate \$900,000 to competitive grants for the agriculture, food and garden-based education programming, and 2% of the total grant dollars to ODE for administration. The total funding request is \$5.6 million, which is an increase of \$4.4 M from the current funding level.

The program has been working well and it has done a lot for kids and for farmers and processors, but farm to school leaders and stakeholders in Oregon think it would be more fair and more effective with these changes.

I’d like to share a short 3 minute video that summarizes some of the exiting research on how farm to school programs work to positively impact kids, farmers and communities.

Following the video we have 3 panels of testimony in support of HB 2721 from farmers, processors, students, school nutrition services staff, and advocates.

Then we will have time for questions.

Thank you.