



Education Subcommittee of Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Co-chairs Senator Monroe and Representative Smith Warner and members of the Committee:

I am writing to express our strong support for Oregon's Farm to School and School Garden program and urge you to protect this important \$4.5m investment, which is currently under threat of elimination. FoodCorps works to connect healthy food to kids in schools across Oregon, and our AmeriCorps service members leverage the Oregon Farm to School program everyday with students in Portland Public, David Douglas Salem-Keizer, North Powder, Phoenix –Talent, Port Orford, Lake County, Corvallis, Bend- La Pine, Nestucca Valley, Central Point and Sisters School Districts.

Currently, across the state, 144 school districts receive Oregon Farm to School program funds to buy, serve, and promote foods produced or processed in the state of Oregon. Funds can be used to purchase a wide range of Oregon products, from farm-fresh vegetables and fruit, to frozen berries, to beef, grains, fish, and dairy products, or even processed foods like hummus or soups. The other portion of the program supports "food, garden, and agriculture-based educational activities." Currently, 24 school districts or partner organizations are receiving additional funds to teach Oregon kids about where their food comes from and how to grow, raise, or catch their own.

The Oregon Farm to School program is a win for Oregon and is having a direct impact in your district. Schools funded by this program invest in local economies across the state by expanding market opportunities for Oregon's farmers, fishers, ranchers, and processors to sell their products to schools. For every \$1 schools spend on local food, nearly \$2 are returned to the economy. Farm to school connects kids to local agriculture and introduces them to nutritious, local foods, shaping a lifetime of healthy habits. In fact, a recent evaluation found that students in schools delivering the types of hands-on learning activities supported by farm to school educational efforts consume three times more fruits and vegetables than students in schools without these types of learning activities. The program also helps to teach kids in new and innovative ways through agriculture-based education.

Oregon has long-been a national leader in supporting farm to school efforts. For the past decade, funding for local food procurement and educational opportunities has been budgeted through the state legislature with strong bipartisan support. The funding is available to any school district in Oregon that opts-in, which means that all Oregon students, regardless of family income, geographic location, or school district budget, have the opportunity to eat local food on the lunch line.

The Oregon Farm to School program is a wise investment that leverages federal and private dollars and provides valuable support to Oregon's agricultural community and schools. We recognize Oregon's tight budget environment, but we believe the widespread benefits of farm to school make this program worthy of continued, strong investment. Please do all you can to preserve funding for this important program.

Sincerely,



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Curt Ellis", with a long, sweeping tail that extends to the right.

Curt Ellis
Co-Founder and CEO
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