



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

June 20, 2017

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

On behalf of Food Roots, I'm writing to express our strong support for HB 2038, the Farm to School Bill, and to request that you do all you can to maintain funding for the Program.

We understand that funding for the Program has been eliminated in the Ways and Means Target Reduction Lists released in April, which we feel is unacceptable. We also understand that you are a long standing supporter of Farm to School in Tillamook County, and in your role as Co-Vice Chair of the Committee on Ways and Means you hold a unique position to speak of the benefits of Farm to School.

I would like to share a snapshot of the programming Food Roots has been able to provide Tillamook County, supported by an Oregon Department of Education Farm to School grant. During the 2016-17 school year, Food Roots provided 565 students across the three school districts with over 310 hours of hands-on nutrition, gardening, and agriculture education. This is in addition to events like school-wide Tasting Tables, farmer visits to classrooms, field trips to local farms, and after school and summer programming.

Tasting Tables are a component of Farm to School programming that connects agriculture, health, economic development, and education in a truly exciting way. This spring we conducted two Tasting Tables, one with salad mix and one with purple potatoes, both items grown within minutes of our schools. Close to 1000 kindergarten through sixth grade students across four school sites had the opportunity to try these produce items during recess; 57% of students tried the salad mix, and 62% of students tried the potatoes. I would challenge any group of adults to see the same rate of enthusiasm for trying something new, especially on a short break during the stress of a work day.

By purchasing this produce from local farms, not only do we directly support the agricultural economy of the county, but we also provide families, teachers, and other community members with the information to purchase products from these local farms. Research across the country supports the value of Farm to School programming like these Tasting Tables. Students who

participate in these activities are more likely to perform at a higher level in school, are more likely to choose fresh fruits and vegetables at lunch, and are more likely to ask for fresh fruits and vegetables to be served at home. These behaviors strengthen Oregon's agriculture economy, and in a time when access to healthy food and diet-related health concerns are at the forefront of public health, Farm to School aids in the development of positive lifelong habits.

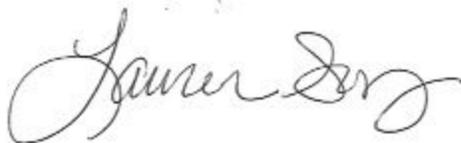
I can say with absolute conviction that the practitioners of Farm to School live and breathe passion for this work. In an uncertain funding environment for both non-profit organizations and schools, it may seem easy to make the decision to work elsewhere. That is simply not the case. Farm to School is vital, deeply and densely woven, interdisciplinary, interindustrial. We see the impact of our work daily in every interaction with students.

Those who support Farm to School support our farmers, support our communities, and perhaps most importantly, support the indisputable fact that all of our children, regardless of ability, intellect, behavior, economic standing, home life or geography has the right to a healthy future.

We understand that everyone is asking to keep their funding, and that the state is in an impossible decision making process. However, \$5.6 million now is an investment with amazing, incalculable return in value. The last thing we need is for an entire state to withdraw support for this work, and in withdrawing that support shout out loudly to the rest of the country and the world that the wellbeing and the future of children doesn't matter.

Please continue your support of Farm to School and do all you can to preserve funding for this program. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lauren Sorg". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Lauren Sorg
Executive Director
Food Roots