



June 21, 2017

Testimony in Support of HB 2038 A – Farm to School Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education

Co-Chairs Monroe and Smith Warner, Members of the Committee:

Friends of Family Farmers is Oregon's leading sustainable agriculture non-profit, representing over 6000 farmers, ranchers and local food supporters across the state. Our mission is focused on advancing policies and programs that protect and expand the ability of Oregon's family farmers to run successful land-based enterprises while providing safe and nutritious food for all Oregonians. We strongly urge your support for HB 2038 A, a bill to maintain current funding levels for Oregon's important Farm to School program in the 2017-19 biennium.

Oregon's Farm to School program is a national model, meeting strong demand for providing healthy, locally grown and produced food in school meal programs. It provides non-competitive grants that reimburse school districts for purchasing Oregon grown and processed foods, as well as competitive grants to support educational activities built around healthy food, agriculture and school gardens.

This program provides a critically important avenue to get fresh fruits and vegetables, as well as locally raised meat and animal products, into school meal programs. This directly supports farmers, ranchers and local food processors, while promoting healthy eating and learning opportunities for children statewide. In 2015, this program was expanded and made available to all school districts in Oregon. While Farm to School purchasing supports Oregon farmers and ranchers of various sizes – it is an important program for the predominantly small and mid-sized family farms that we represent.

Under this program, many local school districts have used Farm to School funding to partner with and directly support smaller farms that produce a wide diversity of crops as they come into season. Local schools can be an important sales channel that helps to support diversified small farm businesses across the state. But institutional purchasing by school districts is also becoming an increasingly important sales channel for Oregon's mid-sized farmers - those that may be too large to sell their products at farmers markets, but not large enough to compete in commodity markets.

We believe that a strong Farm to School program is a critical component for maintaining and strengthening vibrant local and regional food systems in Oregon, and the small and mid-sized farms that are at their core.

We sincerely appreciate your attention to this issue and strongly urge your support for maintaining current funding levels for Oregon's Farm to School program through the 2017-19 biennium through HB 2038 A. Thank you.

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