

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 School Garden Project of Lane County, I am writing to express *our strong support for HB 2038*, the Farm to School Bill. Please do all you can to maintain funding for the program.

HB 2038 maintains funding, in the form of grants administered by Oregon Department of Education, to reimburse school districts for their purchases of Oregon grown and processed foods and for food-based, agriculture-based or garden-based educational activities.

School Garden Project of Lane County has worked to bring school garden-based science education to elementary students for more than 15 years. It has been a labor of love, based on a passion for providing children with a hands-on educational experience that generates excellent academic outcomes, as well as an introduction to the outdoors, a sense of where their food comes from, real gardening skills, and a positive relationship with vegetables.

A typical School Garden Project lesson introduces a science concept in the classroom, then reinforces that lesson with garden activities outside. Add to that an opportunity to eat the vegetables they've grown themselves, and we can point to both positive educational and health outcomes. Our garden education programs are aligned with the Next Generation Science Standards and bring students into the garden during the school day, 8 to 10 times during the school year.

We have just completed the 2016-17 school year, providing in-school and afterschool garden-based education to more than 1,400 students in Lane County.

The results are subtle, yet profound. From the second grader at Thurston Elementary who proclaimed one day, "You know what's awesome today? I love cabbage! I had no idea!" To the fifth grader at Two Rivers/Dos Ríos Elementary who did a great job reviewing the previous week's lesson on photosynthesis. When our instructor complimented him on his understanding of the topic, he looked at her solemnly and said, "No one has ever said that to me in school before." To the César Chávez Elementary fifth grader who announced to our garden educator, "I've learned so much in garden class that my parents are finally going to let me have a small garden at home!"



*Committed to a future in which school garden education helps children become healthy adults who eat their fruits and vegetables, know the basics of growing food, and contribute to a thriving community.*



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While we have not yet had time to compile assessment results for this school year, I can share the impact from the previous school year (2015-16):

- 95% of our students demonstrated increased science and gardening knowledge
- 73% reported trying more vegetables after taking garden education classes for the year
- 68% reported enjoying vegetables more after learning and growing their own in their school garden

Teachers overwhelmingly report that one of the key nonacademic outcomes they see with their young students who participate in garden-based education is that they learn to collaborate and work together as a community. Especially during these challenging budget times, we respectfully ask that that you vote to support HB 2038 to continue these vital programs. Now more than ever, it is critical to invest in our children and our agricultural economy. Please continue to lead the way.

Farm to school is one of those rare issues that connects our rural and urban citizens and enjoys bi-partisan support. Let's not be known as the state that canceled a program that is a win-win-win for kids, farmers, and communities. Please do all you can to preserve funding for this important program!

Sincerely,



John Moriarty  
Executive Director