



February 14, 2017

Testimony in Support of HB 2038 – Farm to School House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources

Chair Clem, Members of the Committee:

Friends of Family Farmers submits this testimony today in support of HB 2038, a bill to continue Oregon's important Farm to School program into the 2017-19 biennium. Oregon's Farm to School program is a national model, growing over time to meet demand, and providing grants that reimburse school districts for purchasing Oregon grown and locally processed foods, as well as for educational activities built around healthy food, agriculture and school gardens.

This program provides an important avenue to get fresh fruits and vegetables, as well as locally produced meat, 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 avenue for the small and mid-sized 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 appreciate your attention to this issue and we strongly urge your support for HB 2038 today.

Thank you.

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