



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Dear Co-Chairs Devlin and Buckley, and members of the Ways and Means Committee,

The undersigned urge you to pass House Bill 2721 which amends and expands Oregon's current Farm to School and School Garden program from \$1.3 million per biennium serving 19 school district to \$5.6 million ensuring all 190 school districts in the state may participate.

Background: Since 2007 Oregon legislators have sought a systemic statewide policy approach to catalyze and institutionalize farm to school across the state. We have pursued a 3 prong approach to (1) tackle issue related to local food supply and distribution through creation of a farm to school position in the Oregon Department of Agriculture (created in 2007 through an agency budget bill); (2) stimulate demand and address issues related to schools' procurement of local foods, through creation of a farm to school position in the Oregon Department of Education (passed in 2008 House Bill 3601A); and (3) provide state monies to school nutrition services to both purchase Oregon agricultural products and provide students with complementary food and garden-based education. The total cost of funding each school up to \$0.15 cents per lunch to buy food produced or processed in Oregon, and \$20,000 for food and garden-based education would be approximately \$22 million per biennium. This third component has not yet been fully funded.

Starting in 2011, the Oregon State Legislature appropriated \$200,000 to create a pilot grant program. The pilot was successful and expanded to a competitive grant program during the 2013 legislative session funded at \$1.3 million and serving 19 school districts. Evaluations of the grant program demonstrate the efficacy of the approach in incentivizing local purchases and in educating youth about agriculture, food, nutrition and the environment.

On March 19, 2015, the House Committee on Rural Communities, Land Use, and Water unanimously passed HB 2721 which amended the current Farm to School grant program to respond to both school nutrition services and business needs. HB 2721 would appropriate \$5.6 million to ensure equitable implementation statewide and a stable market for Oregon food producers. Farmers and processors want to sell to schools but the episodic nature of a competitive grant program created uncertainty and Oregon producers need more stability and a stronger market.

Additionally, HB 2721 will transition from a competitive, to a non-competitive grant program. This would allow all schools, particularly small and rural communities an opportunity to participate. Schools will be allotted 5 cents per lunch to purchase food produced and processed in Oregon, but may use that money on any meal they serve.

Districts will still be required to track and report on local purchases. The cost per biennium to purchase Oregon products will be \$4.6 million.





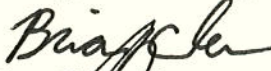
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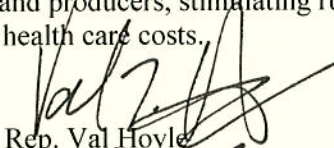
HB 2721 will also continue competitive grants for agriculture, food and garden-based education, and let non-profit organizations and commodity commissions apply, as well as school districts. To date, Oregon already has 600 school gardens, serving approximately 40% of the state that has sprouted primarily in the past 3 years. The vast majority of these gardens are vulnerable in that they are unsupported beyond a volunteer parent or teacher. Oregon communities need support. The need far exceeds the philanthropic communities ability to keep pace.

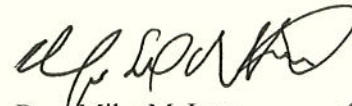
Farm to School procurement and education in school gardens are an evidence-informed approach that work hand in hand to:


- Create market opportunities for Oregon's farmers, fishers, ranchers and food processors
- Improve youth and adults' knowledge of and attitudes towards agriculture, food and nutrition
- Increase children's consumption of fruits and vegetables and shape life-long healthy eating habits
- Bridge urban-rural divides, and bring Oregon's coastline inland
- Increase community food security by strengthening local food systems

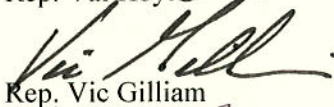
Oregon's Farm to School program is working. We ask you to pass HB 2721. This investment will directly benefit Oregon farmers and producers, stimulating rural economies, promoting healthy eating, and stemming long-term health care costs.

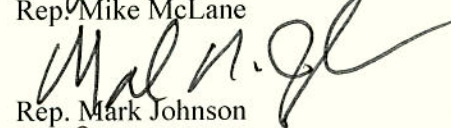

Rep. Brian Clem



Rep. Val Hoyle

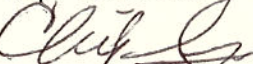

Rep. Mike McLane

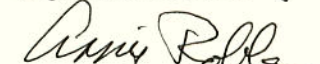

Rep. John Davis



Rep. Vic Gilliam

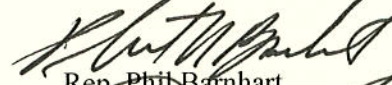

Rep. Mark Johnson



Rep. Carl Wilson



Sen. Chip Shields


Sen. Arnie Roblan

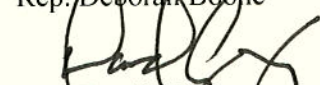

Sen. Doug Whitsett


Rep. Phil Barnhart

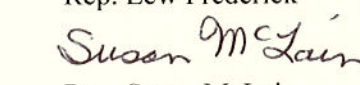

Rep. Deborah Boone

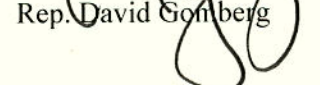

Rep. Paul Evans



Rep. Lew Frederick

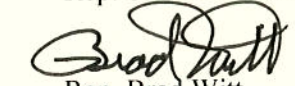

Rep. David Goldberg



Rep. Cliff Bentz


Rep. Susan McLain


Rep. Jeff Reardon


Rep. Vega Pederson


Rep. Brad Witt


Rep. Bill Post

