

State of
Washington
House of
Representatives



January 19, 2016

Honorable Hans Dunshee, House Appropriations Chair

315 John L. O'Brien Building
PO Box 40600

Olympia, WA 98504

Dear Chairman Dunshee,

We are writing in support of funding for the Department of Agriculture's Farm to School and Small Farm Direct Marketing Programs: **we support including \$250,000 in the supplemental budget to partially restore WSDA's Farm to School and Small Farm & Direct Marketing programs.**

Washington has been a national leader in investing in a healthy, vibrant local food system. In 2001, the Small Farm and Direct Marketing Assistance Program (RCW 15.64.050) was created to assist farmers selling directly to consumers. In 2008, the *Local Farms, Healthy Kids Act* created ground-breaking legislation to invest in new markets for Washington farms while increasing access to healthy foods by forming WSDA's Farm to School program (RCW 15.64.060), a nationally recognized program. Combined, these programs have helped Washington's farm economy and kids stay healthier in tough times. To date, WSDA's Farm to School program improved healthy food access in 127 school districts and supported 144 farms as they enter the school market. As a result of both programs, WSDA's support for farm businesses directly assisted millions of dollars in small farm sales. Yet even though both programs have been nationally recognized for the significant impact they have had in strengthening small family commercial farms in Washington State, these programs lost all state funding during the worst of the recession, each program now has had only \$125,000 in restored funding.

Small Farm Direct Marketing and Farm to School help farmers have a greater impact on our economy. According to a recent USDA study, farmers that sell to local markets support 4 times as many jobs as those not engaged in direct and local sales. As a part of the Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act, passed by Congress in 2010, schools are now required to offer more fruits and vegetables as a part of the National School Lunch program. A promisingly bipartisan and bicameral Farm to School bill is expected to be part of Congress' reauthorization of Child Nutrition & WIC programs in the next few months.

SDA's Farm to School staff are there to help ensure that as much of the produce as possible is grown in Washington. An investment in these two critical programs will help grow our agricultural economy and support healthy eating in schools across Washington.

If funded, the Small Farms Direct Marketing and Farm to School Programs will support Washington's kids, schools and farmers by:

- Facilitating \$5million in sales, business investment, and economic growth for Washington farmers
- Assisting 500 + small farms and farm businesses in meeting regulatory requirements for food safety and other qualifications for new sales markets
- Creating or supporting agriculture jobs in sales and economic development
- Helping school districts across the state serve fresh, local food to students
- Leveraging more in federal grants in Washington State

The Farm to School and Small Farm Direct Marketing Programs ensure that small commercial farmers have access to information and help to navigate new markets for their products. This will bring the best of Washington's bounty into homes, restaurants, many grocery stores, hospitals and school cafeterias across the state. Since the cuts in 2011 both programs have maintained some of the critical services they provide with funding from competitive grants through USDA, but those grants are running out. If the legislature doesn't act quickly these programs will be lost for good. **We urge you to include \$250,000 in the supplemental budget for WSDA's Farm to School and Small Farms Direct Marketing.**

Respectfully,



Representative Brian Blake

Representative Jessyn Farrell

Representative JD Rossetti

19th Legislative District

46th Legislative District

19th Legislative District



Representative Gael Tarleton
36th Legislative District



Representative David Sawyer
29th Legislative District



Representative Roger Goodman
45th Legislative District



Representative Derek Stanford
1st Legislative District



Representative Marcus Riccelli
3rd Legislative District



Representative Cindy Ryu
32nd Legislative District



Representative Mia Gregerson
33rd Legislative District



Representative Tina Orwall
33rd Legislative District



Representative Larry Haler
8th Legislative District



Representative Tana Senn
41st Legislative District



Representative June Robinson
38th Legislative District



Representative Gerry Pollet
46th Legislative District



Representative Dan Griffey

35th Legislative District



Representative Brady Walkinshaw

43rd Legislative District



Representative Dave Hayes

10th Legislative District



Representative Kevin Van De Wege

24th Legislative District



Representative Norma Smith

10th Legislative District



Representative Norm Johnson

14th Legislative District



Representative Gina McCabe

14th Legislative District



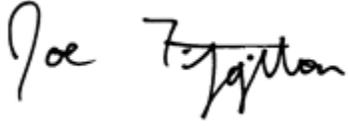
Representative Drew Stokesbary

31st Legislative District



Representative Vincent Buys

42nd Legislative District



Representative Joe Fitzgibbon
34th Legislative District



Representative Chris Reykdal
22nd Legislative District



Representative Eric Pettigrew
37th Legislative District



Representative Strom Peterson
21st Legislative District



Representative Noel Frame
36th Legislative District