

THERE IS AN URGENT NEED FOR LC 79 IN 2008

LC 79 requests \$95,000 from the General Fund to create a pilot farm-to-school and school garden program in the Oregon Department of Education (ODE).

Biting at the teacher's apple? NO.

LC 79 is the busy bee pollinating all the blooms on the apple tree.

While LC 79 is related to the farm-to-school and school garden concepts heard during the regular 2007 session, it is distinct.

The Oregon Department of Agriculture's (ODA) new farm-to-school activities, new state nutrition standards, changing local wellness policies, and substantial private-sector investment collectively create an urgent need for an immediate increase in ODE's capacity.

Consider:

A critical lack of inter-agency coordination exists

- ODA recently hired a farm-to-school coordinator to work with the Oregon agricultural sector to get more Oregon agricultural products into our school cafeterias.
- Based on federal funding received, one of ODA's first priorities is to develop five new products for Oregon schools that incorporate Oregon ingredients by December 2008.
- ODE administers the state's school meals program and is the only state agency equipped to interpret the tangle of federal school meal regulations. Yet ODE currently has little capacity to work with ODA on farm-to-school and school garden programs

New state and local policies create time sensitive opportunities

- New school nutrition standards (HB 2650) will be phased in beginning July 2008. Food processors are thus now reformulating products to meet new requirements, presenting a critical timeframe to incorporate Oregon agricultural products into school foods. This opportunity will pass before the 2009 legislature has time to act.
- During the 2008-2009 school year, school districts will draft administrative directives for their Local Wellness Policies. ODE could help districts incorporate farm-to-school and school garden programs during a critical time in policy development.

Private sector demonstrates school food is an urgent priority

- The Kaiser Permanente Community Fund at the Northwest Health Foundation just announced a \$296,000 investment to fund a comprehensive pilot farm-to-school program in two school districts: Gervais and Portland.
- This private foundation investment will inform policy considerations in the 2009 general session and would benefit from a stronger public partner in ODE.

If ODE does not receive immediate resources to participate, **the agency responsible for administering the school meal program will be largely absent from farm-to-school and school garden activities in Oregon.**



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