

Wisconsin Farmers Union: Joint Finance Committee votes to restore Farm to School funding

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CHIPPEWA FALLS – Wisconsin Farmers Union commends the Joint Finance Committee for unanimously voting in favor of a provision to restore Farm to School funding in the budget. Funding for the program had been eliminated in the Governor’s proposed budget this spring.

WFU was among a broad coalition of groups that signed onto a letter circulated to legislators in April, urging them to save the program, which spurs over \$9 million dollars in purchases of locally grown and processed foods by Wisconsin schools each year. Farmers Union members also lobbied for Farm to School during the family farm organization’s Farm & Rural Lobby Day at the State Capitol in February.

The Wisconsin Farm to School Program connects K-12 public and private schools, early care centers, hospitals, universities and other institutions with Wisconsin-grown and processed fruits, vegetables, dairy products, proteins, and other nutritious foods. Created in 2009, Farm to School has a strong track record of maximizing local food purchases and is estimated to benefit 500,000 students across the state each year.

“The unanimous, bipartisan vote by JFC members in support of restoring funding to Wisconsin Farm to School at DATCP is extremely encouraging,” said WFU

Government Relations Associate Nick Levendofsky. “We join the members of our coalition in thanking these key legislators for their efforts, and look forward to working with members of the Assembly and Senate to ensure its passage in their respective chambers.”

“The Farm to School Program is a meaningful investment in the future of Wisconsin’s farm economy and the next generation,” said WFU President Darin Von Ruden. “The program connects farmers to steady regional institutional markets – which in turn is helping farm families, their rural communities and the students who benefit from the wholesome, local food on their plate.”

Following passage out of the Joint Finance Committee, the full budget still needs to pass out of the Assembly and Senate, and then proceed to Governor Walker for his signature or veto. There is no current timeline for the budget, but the process is picking up speed, and some speculate a deal will be reached sometime next month.