

Ranchland Packing Co.  
1201 Centennial Ave.  
Butte, MT 59701  
406-782-6371

**RE: Support the Farm to School Bill (HB-471)**

Chairman Ankney and members of the House Appropriations Committee:

The Farm to School Bill would be a great start to a must needed change in our local economy. I have not looked into any numbers recently, but from my memory; Agriculture is Montana's largest source of economy and Cattle is the bulk of that. I would assume (only from speaking with producers) the amount of livestock in the State is decreasing. I believe revenue wise it is pretty flat because the cost of livestock is higher, but the numbers are down. Down numbers mean less jobs, and the higher livestock prices does not mean it is going into the Ranchers pockets. It goes to higher feed costs, and higher trucking costs.

The Farm to School Bill would immediately create more jobs. At my plant it takes about eight hours of labor at fifteen dollars per hour to produce one thousand pounds of meat. No one here is standing around looking for work. I would have to hire at least a part time employee to do this extra work. The new employee would live and spend locally. Their children may even go to one of the schools buying the meat. New employees here means additional revenue for my insurance company, workers compensation, our utility companies, etc. The new employee is going to need fuel for their vehicle, maintenance, tires, etc. They will buy groceries at the local grocery stores, eat at local restaurants, and buy a car from a local car salesman.

All the local ranchers and farmers are concerned about their futures, and if they are concerned we should all be concerned.

I believe four corporate giants control 75% of the agriculture industry in this country. They are continually beating down the prices for grains, produce, and livestock. If we cannot do something to help our fellow ranchers and farmers, it could be devastating to Montana's economy. Ranchers and farmers are telling the next generations to go to college and move to a city where they can get a stable career. The next generations are not going to do this work, its physically difficult, long hours, no vacations, no health insurance, if they can't make a living doing it.

If I were producing one thousand pounds of ground beef, that means I would need to by at least two cows from a local rancher. That means more revenue for that ranch, probably another job, higher utilities, higher insurance, vehicle fuel, maintenance, and more. The more cattle these ranches produce means more feed they will consume. The more feed they consume means they will need employees, fuel, and maintenance, to produce the extra feed.

Right now the schools in Montana are probably buying beef produced in Minnesota, Colorado, or somewhere in the Midwest. The Farm to School Bill would also reduce the environmental impact significantly. The meat that is going to these schools currently is being trucked thousands of miles. It seems crazy to me, living in the heart of cattle country, where it is our main economy to be buying beef raised and produced thousands of miles away. These schools are creating economy in States like Colorado and Minnesota, and then sending their students to me asking for donations. It just isn't right.

Justin Fisher  
Plant Manager/Owner  
Ranchland Packing Co.  
Thanks for supporting Montana's agriculture industry!