



Quality of life should never depend on age.

February 10, 2012

Honorable Laurie Monnes Anderson, Chair
Honorable Jeff Kruse, Vice-Chair
State Capitol Room 453
900 Court St. NE
Salem OR 97301

Dear Health Care, Human Services and Rural Health Policy Committee –

The Elders in Action Commission is a senior advocacy council that advises the City of Portland, Multnomah County, and the Aging and Disability Services Department on elder issues and services. Through our Senior Hunger and Poverty Work Group (SHPWG) we take great interest in hunger and nutrition issues for Oregon's older adult population.

EiA's Senior Hunger and Poverty Work Group has worked on outreach to Multnomah County seniors to increase enrollment on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) for years, and we have found that one of the best tools for breaking down barriers with the 2/3 of eligible seniors who don't access SNAP is the possibility of receiving Senior Farm Direct Nutrition Vouchers. These vouchers allow low-income seniors to participate in their communities at the local farmer's market in a way they didn't feel was accessible to them before, the stigma of local produce being too expensive is set aside when seniors have the vouchers to encourage them to attend the farmer's market. This is great for seniors both physically as they will be eating nutritious food and the physical activity associated with farmer's market shopping, but it is also great for their social wellbeing to get out into their communities and see the lively intergenerational activity of a market. It is also a boon for the local economy as our Oregon farmers have a vastly increased customer base, just last year this program provided over 600 farmers with vouchers totaling over \$800,000. That is Oregon money putting local food on the table for Oregon seniors, and providing income to support Oregon farmers, a win-win-win.

The SHPWG has partnered with Multnomah County to increase outreach and information on the Senior Farm Direct Nutrition program over the last couple of seasons with presentations, translated materials, a letter explaining how the program works, and a map of local farmer's markets. This has led to a large boost in enrollment in our area, which means thousands more seniors are incorporating local produce into their diets. However, it has also led to a wait list of 6,000 seniors in Oregon wanting to participate in the program if the funds were available. That is why we support SB 1567, and ask you to appropriate \$350,000 in funding to expand this program to serve 10,000 Oregon seniors. This is money that increases the health of our low-income seniors, and the health of our small farmer economy. Please join the Senior Hunger and Poverty Work Group in our commitment to improving access to fresh produce and improved nutrition for Oregon's older adults, and please increase Oregon's commitment to this effort by passing SB 1567.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Gentile".

Bill Gentile, Senior Hunger and Poverty Work Group Chair
Elders in Action Commissioner

Mission: To assure a vibrant community through the active involvement of older adults.

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