

March 11, 2013

TO: The Honorable Laurie Monnes Anderson, Chair
Senate Health Care and Human Services Committee

FROM: Sue Woodbury, Program Manager
Nutrition & Health Screening (WIC) Program
Public Health Division
Oregon Health Authority

SUBJECT: SB 456

Chair Monnes Anderson and Members of the Committee:

My name is Sue Woodbury, Program Manager for the Nutrition and Health Screening Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) in the Oregon Public Health Division's Center for Prevention and Health Promotion, Oregon Health Authority. I am pleased to provide written testimony to give information on Senate Bill 456.

WIC administers the Senior Farm Direct Nutrition Program, which focuses on encouraging seniors to eat locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables. This program provides \$32 in the form of \$4 checks for low-income seniors to spend at local farmers' markets and farm stands from June through October each year. The supplemental funds would be used to serve 11,000 more eligible seniors.

Oregon's Senior Farm Direct Nutrition Program has been in operation for twelve years and is very successful at encouraging the purchase and consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables from local farmers. Access to fresh produce helps seniors maintain their health. The Farm Direct Nutrition Program makes fresh produce available to those who might otherwise have to do without this vital part of a healthy diet.

As the downturn in our economy continues to greatly impact seniors on limited incomes, the opportunity to provide increased funds for food would be of particular benefit. Thousands of eligible seniors are turned away every year due to limited funding.

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The dollars from this vital program also help small family farmers who serve this program. In fact, we've learned from interviews with authorized farmers that many of them have made changes to their operations in response to their senior shoppers. Examples include discount days or specials for senior shoppers, packaging their produce in incremental dollar amounts, and targeting their marketing. Participating farmers appreciate their role in making local produce accessible for everyone, and they appreciate the sales. These families, in turn, spend their Farm Direct dollars in their local communities, promoting local economic development.

Center for Prevention and Health Promotion staff and I will be happy to be a resource to the committee if they have any further questions. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony today.