



**American  
Heart  
Association®**

To: Senate Human Services Committee

Date: February 21, 2019

Re: Senate Bill 727

Good afternoon Chair Gelser and members of the committee. My name is Christina Bodamer, and I am the Oregon Government Relations Director for the American Heart Association, here today in support of SB 727.

Only 11% of Oregonians consume enough healthy produce for a healthy life. But for the one in six Oregonians experiencing food insecurity, the cost of eating the recommended servings of healthy produce is unaffordable.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) has been an important food safety net for over 50 years. However, as the program has no nutrition standards, the 45 million Americans who count on the program for food could face health problems due to unhealthy diets. SNAP incentive programs like Double Up Food Bucks work to change that dynamic.

Data from pilot projects across the nation show that SNAP incentive programs, like Double Up Food Bucks, help to increase the overall Healthy Eating Index – a key measure of Americans diet quality – as well as the fruit and vegetable components of the HEI score. Simply put, SNAP incentives, like Double Up Food Bucks, can help people eat more fruits and vegetables and increase the quality of their diet.

SNAP incentives programs help families stretch their dollars and buy healthier options, which mean that children are taught healthy behaviors, establishing lifelong habits that will support their overall health and wellness.

Eating more fruits and vegetables can improve overall health particularly for SNAP participants and can reduce the incidence of chronic diseases like heart disease and cancer. Studies show:

- SNAP recipients who were given incentives to buy more fruits and vegetables ate almost a quarter of a cup more fruits and vegetables per day.



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- SNAP recipients who are given incentives to buy more fruits and vegetable not only spend more of their other SNAP benefits on these healthy foods, but also add a greater variety of healthful food to their diets.
- SNAP incentives programs have shown to cut health care costs. In Massachusetts, 73% of Medicaid cost growth fell after SNAP benefits increased – especially for people with chronic illnesses with high sensitivity to food insecurity.

SNAP incentive programs like Double Up Food Bucks show that it is possible to adjust the SNAP program to improve nutrition without increasing stigma on the beneficiaries or burden on retailers. Oregon can do more than just provide low-income neighbors with food, we can provide them with healthy food. I urge your support of SB 727.