



UPSTREAM
PUBLIC HEALTH

To: Senate Committee on Human Services

Meeting Date: February 21, 2019

Re: SB727

Dear Chairwoman Gelser and members of the Committee on Human Services,

My name is Jill Hutson, and I am the Board Chair for Upstream Public Health in Portland, Oregon. I am writing in support of SB727 which will expand SNAP benefits for Oregonians giving them better access to healthy foods because:

Kids will win.

Research shows that children's nutritional needs must be met primarily through their diets and that healthy eating patterns are associated with positive health outcomes. Eating a variety of fruits and vegetables is a key recommendation of the 2015-2020 USDA Dietary Guidelines, and innovative approaches to increasing food access are an essential part of improving population health. Nearly half of SNAP recipients nationwide are children, and with 90% of SNAP customers in Oregon reporting that Double Up Food Bucks increased their fruit and vegetable purchases, this program is a proven way to get fresh, local whole foods onto the plates of the littlest low-income Oregonians.

Health outcomes will improve.

The Oregon Health Authority's strategic plan for public health modernization prioritizes improving nutrition and slowing the increase in obesity. Unhealthy diets cost the state billions of dollars each year. In Oregon, the proportion of 11th grade youth considered obese increased by 40 percent in less than a decade between 2009 and 2017. One in ten Oregon adults has diabetes, a chronic disease associated with obesity. Diabetes alone costs Oregon an estimated \$3 billion each year in medical expenditures and lost productivity. Creating opportunities for greater access to fruits and vegetables is a powerful weapon in the fight to slow the increase in obesity and associated chronic diseases, especially for low income communities that are most affected.

Farmers will grow stronger.

Double Up Health Bucks increases the reach of Oregon's locally grown foods. Nearly 70 percent of farmers reported making more money with Double Up Food Bucks. Agriculture plays a vital role in Oregon's economy, supporting the families that own nearly all of Oregon's farms, the 40% of farmers who are women, and the countless other businesses and individuals who benefit from a booming farm sector. Funding that supports this program supports Oregon's farmers. When farmers thrive, all of Oregon thrives.

Oregon will lead the nation.

Oregon is a national leader in systems reform that improves the lives and well-being of its residents. If Oregon provides funding to assist its SNAP recipients in purchasing fruits and vegetables, the state will join a handful of others, as well as the City of Seattle, at the forefront of a growing national movement to leverage federal funds that prioritize healthy eating for its people.

Thank you very much for considering my testimony today and for working to improve the lives of Oregonians.