



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 727

SENATE HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

Submitted By Spencer Masterson, Statewide Network Manager

February 21, 2019

Oregon Food Bank is excited to partner with the Farmers Market Fund, Portland Area Community Supported Agriculture, Oregon Farmers Markets Association and the American Heart Association to:

- Increase access to fresh Oregon-grown produce to food insecure individuals.
- Support Oregon farmers and businesses.
- Improve the health of the most vulnerable of our population.

Senate Bill 727 helps to expand the SNAP Double Up Food Bucks (DUFB) not only to every farmers market in the state, but also to grocery stores in areas with limited access to fresh produce. Oregon Food Bank will work with 6-8 grocery stores to pilot the program in a grocery setting. In choosing the locations of the pilot stores, we will be focusing on stores:

- In areas with high rates of food insecurity.
- Located in USDA-defined food deserts and surrounding communities.
- In communities with limited access to Oregon-grown fresh produce.
- With innovative store owners interested in piloting a program aimed at increasing sales of Oregon-grown produce for low-income Oregonians.

DUFB will increase the purchasing power of an estimated 150,000 Oregonians, not only increasing food security and health for many Oregonians *today*, but it will also support the local economy and Oregon business owners which will ultimately lead to ending hunger *tomorrow*.

Despite an improved economy since the Great Recession, the high costs of living have minimized the benefits of Oregon's historic low-unemployment rate. One in six Oregonians is more likely to suffer from malnourishment and the health consequences of a poor diet as a direct result of food insecurity. The Oregon Food Bank Network has worked hard over the last decade to improve the nutritional quality of the food we provide, including the sourcing and distribution of fresh produce. **Food insecure Oregonians have told us they want more fresh produce and that fresh produce is one of the most important items they receive from food pantries.** The demand for produce at our pantries is a reflection of the unaffordability of fresh produce for low-income households. We also recognize the limited availability of fresh produce at grocery stores in sparsely populated parts of the state.

Oregon Food Bank has documented the difficulties facing rural grocery store owners to stock perishable items like milk, bread and fresh fruits and vegetables. Rural grocery stores face fuel surcharge costs, especially for any stores not located on the I-5 or I-84 corridor, and minimum purchasing requirements which make it difficult for small stores to order frequently from distributors. While we strive to meet the needs of food insecure Oregonians through our pantries and meal sites, we also want to promote the economic viability of Oregon's farmers markets and rural grocery stores as vital parts to self-sufficient communities.

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As David Proctor, the Director of the Rural Grocery Initiative at Kansas State University notes, “grocery stores are important cogs in the economic engine powering rural America. These stores are a significant source of local taxes which help fund city services, support local libraries and the arts, promote neighborhood improvements, sustain and improve local parks, build swimming pools, and facilitate a host of local community development initiatives...Grocery stores often serve as public spaces for meetings and socializing” and “provide a sense of cultural and civic identity to a community.”



Developing the SNAP Double-Up Bucks program into a true statewide program through Senate Bill 727 is an incredible opportunity for Oregon to address three important goals: **reducing hunger, supporting families, farmers and economies, and promoting public health.**

Oregon Food Bank appreciates your support.

Sincerely,

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