

Testimony in Support of House Bill 2292
House Committee On Human Services
Submitted by Molly Notarianni, Executive Director
March 3, 2021



Chair Williams and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on behalf of the Farmers Market Fund. Since 2012, Farmers Market Fund has worked tirelessly to make healthy, locally grown food accessible to *all* Oregonians, and we are excited to express our strong support of **HB 2292**.

These bills would support the expansion of Double Up Food Bucks Oregon (DUFBO): a SNAP incentive program that has been changing Oregonians' lives since 2015. For every dollar spent on SNAP-eligible foods at participating farmers markets, farm share (CSA) programs, and grocery stores across the state, shoppers receive an additional dollar to spend on Oregon-grown fruits and vegetables. The program helps families bring home more fresh produce, gives Oregon's farmers a financial boost, and supports local economies (every \$1 of SNAP spent locally generates \$1.79 in local economic activity¹). We see the program as a win-win-win. **Double Up Food Bucks is a perfect investment as we work to rebuild Oregon post-pandemic, serving an immediate need of feeding people while investing in local farmers and local economies.**

Food insecurity has nearly doubled since the start of the pandemic, and today one in four Oregonians are food insecure. Certain demographics, including communities of color, immigrants and refugees, single parents and caregivers, and our trans and gender non-conforming neighbors, perpetually experiencing the highest levels of hunger. At the same time, in 2020 many of Oregon's family farmers have experienced extreme economic hardship, due to the loss of large customers like restaurants and institutions. The income provided through farmers markets and farm shares is a lifeline for small- and medium-sized producers.

A 2019 appropriation of \$1.5 Million in one-time funds from the State of Oregon provided essential funding that has sustained the DUFBO program at farmers markets and farm shares, while supporting the expansion into select grocery outlets, allowing for greater access to fresh fruits and vegetables in areas of the state that are not currently served by farmers markets. Our

1

<https://www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2019/july/quantifying-the-impact-of-snap-benefits-on-the-us-economy-and-jobs/>

coalition includes the Oregon Food Bank, the Oregon Farmers Markets Association, the American Heart Association, and the Pacific Northwest CSA Coalition: organizations with a long history of collaborating to approach ending hunger, improving health, and supporting farmers from complementary perspectives.

With this state support, in 2020 FMF was able to offer DUFB at 53 farmers markets in 18 counties in Oregon. The dramatic increase in food insecurity caused by the pandemic has resulted in a dramatic increase in demand for DUFB. Farmers markets from Baker City and Bend to Roseburg and Tillamook reported that, on average, their SNAP and DUFB sales had doubled since 2019. Some sites saw as much as 300% growth. In addition to distributing more than \$385,000 in DUFB to shoppers at farmers markets across Oregon in 2020, the program leveraged more than \$710,000 in SNAP sales, **resulting in over \$1 Million in sales for Oregon producers at farmers markets alone!**

The impacts of DUFB aren't purely financial. Surveys of DUFB shoppers demonstrate that the produce incentives work:

- 93% of SNAP shoppers purchased more fresh produce as a result of the match,
- 87% reported having more food in their house, and
- 88% felt an improvement in their overall health

Farmers market shoppers have also shared the personal impact of accessing fruits and vegetables during the pandemic:

"DUFB has made a tremendous difference in the availability of fresh food for our household. We now endeavor to budget our SNAP benefits to take advantage of DUFB each month and marvel at how much fresh produce we get to eat. DUFB means we have fresh fruit and veg every day of the week which wasn't the case before these benefits were available."

"I am medically fragile and so have avoided supermarkets, the farmers market has provided a safe, outdoor place to go and select my own healthy groceries, and using the double bucks has allowed me to use the market as a primary source of food which has been wonderful. I am so very grateful for the program and the market."

"DUFB has been an amazing resource during these times, it has been helping so much! I definitely eat more fresh fruits and vegetables because of DUFB. Also it completely shifts where I spend my allowance. Now about 50% of my food stamp benefit money goes to local businesses rather than 10%."

“DUFB has allowed me to shop for healthy, local produce with less stress and anxiety about running out of SNAP dollars so I can get higher quality food. It has encouraged me to go to the farmer’s market regularly, which has been life changing— I feel more connected to community and to my well-being.”

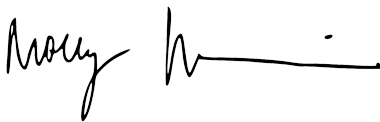
Despite DUFB’s success, SNAP matching programs currently exist at only half of Oregon’s farmers markets. This leaves many farmers markets – including many in rural areas - without any SNAP incentive program. One quarter of Oregon’s farmers markets do not even have the necessary equipment in place to accept SNAP. This \$3 million appropriation would support the expansion of DUFB to all 120 farmers markets in the state. Individualized technical assistance will help markets who are not currently registered to accept SNAP develop the necessary systems and obtain the required technology.

Supporting HB 2292 will also enable program partners to leverage additional federal funds. The 2018 Farm Bill includes \$250 million for DUFB and similar programs, but requires a dollar for dollar match of state and private funds. **With the state’s \$1.5 million investment in 2019, FMF successfully secured \$1.9 Million in federal matching funds;** any future state funding will also be eligible for this dollar for dollar federal match. Without continued state funding, the program will likely be forced to drastically limit the number of participating sites in the next biennium. Due to the economic impact of COVID-19, this scale back would come at a time when SNAP, P-EBT and DUFB are needed most.

Today, twenty five percent of Oregonians are experiencing food insecurity - the highest rate in nearly a century. At the same time, the majority of our state’s small- and mid-sized family farmers have faced countless challenges as they’ve navigated their businesses throughout the pandemic. **Supporting Double Up Food Bucks is the perfect investment as we work to rebuild Oregon post-pandemic: families win, farmers win, and Oregon’s economy thrives.**

Again, thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony. Farmers Market Fund appreciates your support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Molly Notarianni', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Molly Notarianni, Executive Director
Farmers Market Fund