

**Testimony of Rebecca Landis in favor of SB 440/SB 555
Before the Senate Committee on Human Services, Mental Health and Recovery
Feb. 2, 2021**

Chair Gelser and members of the committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to testify remotely.

I am market director at Corvallis-Albany Farmers' Markets. I speak and write to express our support for these twin bills supporting the continuation and expansion of Double Up Food Bucks Oregon (DUFBO) with state, federal and local dollars.

This well-regarded program gives SNAP customers real access to the fresh and local foods that will enhance their ability to work and learn. Those dollars in turn support small farmers, many of whom also qualify for SNAP.

Both SNAP users and our farmers were lifted by the 2019 appropriation. No one knew what would come next, but there is no doubt about the benefits of the state's contribution or the imperative to continue applying this approach in Oregon.

Thanks to the return of Double Up in Oregon, markets were in a good position to help our communities weather the pandemic. Along with temporary changes that boosted SNAP, Double Up helped many families start or maintain healthy diets at a time when everyone's baseline health needs to be as strong as possible.

Many of us in farmers' markets think of ourselves as working for "community food security." Most had never experienced the meaning of those three simple words so graphically as we did last season.

Farmers' markets – plus the groceries and CSAs noted by others testifying – were the only places in 2020 where Oregon families relying on SNAP were able to stretch their budgets in this way to afford more fresh produce.

Encouraging SNAP spending in our communities is a simple but rapid form of economic development. When SNAP dollars go to direct marketing farmers, much more of the money stays in Oregon.

Just a few numbers can show that expanded DUFBO and SNAP sales were a notable boost to small farmers. At just the outdoor farmers' markets I run in Albany and Corvallis, SNAP redemption topped \$65,000 and we also redeemed nearly \$36,000 in Double Up Food Bucks. SNAP redemption is up about 62 percent compared with the years with no DUFBO program and only patchwork local matching programs.

Looking at my spreadsheet of stats from 2011 to the present, there's a clear pattern: The more matching funds we have to distribute, the more SNAP we redeem at farmers' markets.

Although you may have seen 2020 portrayed as a bonanza for some farmers, most faced higher operating costs and logistical challenges on top of loss of marketing channels like restaurants, catering and even some grocery accounts.

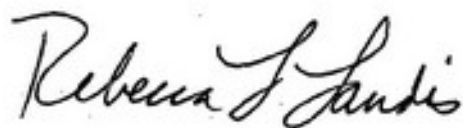
Just when we felt we'd adjusted, wildfire smoke cost us multiple market days that were unsafe to operate and also stunted higher revenue crops like tomatoes.

For farmers' markets like those I run, consistent and centrally managed funding through the Farmers Market Fund is the only way we can maintain robust outreach to eligible households and a consistent and respectful program that does not subject our participants to needless uncertainty.

Markets still have to raise some money locally, but the number of communities that can do this is much greater than the very few that might shoulder this alone. Farmers' markets in Oregon are often lightly staffed -- if not all volunteer. It's tough to attempt this level of fundraising and still manage our markets well. In Linn and Benton counties, we created a new nonprofit called Fresh & Local, First to help raise the local match. Many of our fundraising methods are not safe at this time.

Everyone wins with DUFB in markets. SNAP customers were able to afford a much more nutritious diet, farmers were motivated to attend more markets per year, and our farmers' markets became more inclusive community places.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rebecca Landis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rebecca Landis
Market Director