

Dear Co-Chairs Senator Johnson, Senator Steiner Hayward, Representative Rayfield, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Caitlin Seyfried. I am a market manager in Astoria, OR. I am writing to request your support for **SB 555**.

SB 555 supports the expansion of Double Up Food Bucks Oregon, a SNAP incentive program with a proven record of success. For every dollar spent on SNAP-eligible foods at participating farmers markets, farm share programs, and grocery stores across the state, shoppers will receive a dollar to spend on Oregon-grown fruits and vegetables.

The Double Up Food Bucks program is important because it helps to close a crucial gap between fresh, locally produced food and low income Oregonians. Two years ago, I was eligible for SNAP benefits as an AmeriCorps member in The Dalles. My food budget with benefits was tight, and although I loved shopping at the Farmers Market, the prices were above what I could afford. Since The Dalles Farmers Market offered Double Up Food Bucks, I was able to shop for food at the market and buy extra fresh produce from farmers. In my current position as Programs Manager at North Coast Food Web in Astoria, I have a deep understanding of local farmers and why they have to set prices higher than those at your average grocery store. This program also gives a crucial financial boost to Oregon farmers who are faced with an uphill battle to compete with industrial agriculture. When you shop at the Farmers Market instead of the big box grocery store, you get to meet your neighbors, you get to learn about your food, and you keep money in local hands. Allowing more low-income folks to shop with local farmers benefits our economy, the well-being of low-income folks and farmers, the resiliency of our local food systems, and strengthens our communities.

COVID-19 has only exacerbated financial instability of Oregon families and farmers, as you well know. The Double Up Food Bucks program is needed now more than ever. Through the pandemic, Oregon farmers markets have organized to keep communities safe as essential local food markets. In Astoria, our online marketplace at North Coast Food Web is currently applying for Double Up Food Bucks funding. We are prepared to start offering the incentive by June 2021 to customers for a low-contact order pick-up option and a *home delivery option*, free to SNAP and low-income customers. In our efforts to eliminate barriers for low income folks to be able to access fresh, local food, Double Up Food Bucks incentives will be crucial to making this food affordable for someone trying to get by on a SNAP benefits grocery budget.

Thank you for the consideration and for your service.

- Caitlin Seyfried (Astoria, Oregon)