

Dear legislators,

My name is Stephanie Blair and am the Executive Director of St. Johns Center for Opportunity, the organization that runs the St. Johns Farmers Market. As I am sure you can imagine, the number of individuals using their SNAP benefits at the farmers market this year increased dramatically over any year on record. In 2019, we distributed \$2486 in Veggie Vouchers (our own food access program) to 53 participants, ran 570 SNAP transactions totaling \$10,466, and distributed \$5078 in Double Up Food Bucks, with over 100 customers using their SNAP benefits at the St. Johns Farmers Market for the first time.

Toward the end of the season we ran out of funding to continue the programs through the duration of the season. Imagine having to deliver the news to your hungry neighbors that they will no longer be able to stretch their dollar on fresh, locally grown, culturally relevant healthy foods at the farmers market. It is a horrible feeling when we know the need is so high and that for many, these programs are the only way they can participate in this community experience during a time when finding community is especially difficult. In addition, there is access to foods not available at grocery stores. Please consider expanding this phenomenal program so that all may enjoy healthy local foods, which also serves to increase business revenue for local food suppliers and improves sustainability metrics for the state of Oregon.

All my best,  
Stephanie