

February 1, 2021

Chair Gelser and Members of the Committee,

My name is Nella Mae Parks, and I am a farmer in Cove, northeast Oregon. I am writing to request your support for **SB 440 & 555**.

SB 555 and SB 440 support 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.

This program is important to me for two main reasons. First, it increases access to fresh, locally grown food for my neighbors, and second, it increases sales for my farm.

I accept hundreds of dollars of Double Up Food Bucks (DUFB) each Saturday at the La Grande Farmers Market. Shoppers who use their Oregon Trail EBT card also get a \$10 match at each market to buy more produce grown by local farmers and ranchers like me. **Just like the Oregon Farm Direct Nutrition Program, Double Up Food Bucks help food benefit dollars recirculate more times in our rural community** than if they were spent at a big box store. My business directly benefits from DUFB purchases. My employees benefit too because of the income the program brings to my business.

The impact of DUFB is not small. At our medium-sized, 5-month long market, shoppers use over \$10,000 per year in DUFB to buy healthy, local produce. This money benefits many farms in my county and region and can make or break a slow day at the market. Furthermore, the DUFB program results in higher Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, aka food stamps) spending at our market as well. Double Up Food Bucks is both an incentive to shop at our market and a welcome sign showing our community we really want everyone to shop with us.

The La Grande Farmers Market started our Double Up Food Bucks program about four years ago. In the first two years we received grant funding for the \$10 matches. The program was so popular and so well supported by all shoppers at the market, we were able to fundraise about \$10,000 per year from grants and local donations for the last two years to support the program. However, the grant funding is not sustainable for the long term.

SB 555 and SB 440 would assure the long-term sustainability of the DUFB program for our market and our shoppers. **Double Up Food Bucks is not a complicated or convoluted safety net program--it directly addresses food insecurity and nutrition by putting dollars in the hands of folks who need them and directing them towards the purchase of healthy, fresh food from local farmers and ranchers.**

Furthermore, many of the vendors at our farmers market themselves are low-income, so DUFB directly benefits even more low-income people.

Given the deep economic impact and loss of life and income during the COVID-19 pandemic, I think the Double Up Food Bucks program is more important than ever. **More and more of my neighbors are in need of both food assistance and work.** I am able to provide both through produce sales, produce donations, and by hiring local people. During COVID there has been a great increase in demand for my produce, and I have hired more people, produced more food, and provided a free food pantry at our farmstand. I am shopping for my elderly neighbors and helped our school meal program reach elderly residents and students. I feel I am doing all I can with my neighbors to help my community, but I am just one person and one farm. **I urge Oregon's senators and representatives to do all they can and support the citizen efforts on the ground like Double Up Food Bucks.**

The power of our state government is to help address the problems and build the things that are too complex, too large or too global for us to address ourselves on the community scale. Please support the citizens of the state support our neighbors by passing SB 555 and SB 440.

Thank you for the consideration and for your service to our state.

Sincerely,
Nella Mae Parks
Nella Mae's Farm
Cove, Oregon