

Greetings Chair Gelser and Members of the Committee,

My name is Angel Barclay. I am an employee at Food For Lane County's Grassroots Garden in Eugene, 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.

This program is so valuable to our community. Before I joined the FFLC team, I worked in retail, and qualified for food stamps. Whenever Double Up Food Bucks was available, I would go out of my way to visit the market each day it was open. The quality of food available at our farmer's markets is unparalleled. The best of the best in the valley. To be able to double my access to high quality fruits and vegetables during their peak season was a huge boon to my meal planning. I felt rich when I was able to buy things I typically avoid because they feel too expensive, like fresh berries. The sad but real stigma of using food stamps was lessened, because I felt like I was engaging with my local community, building connections with and supporting farmers.

For farmers, this year has been wildly unpredictable. Lots of farmers work with local restaurants, and those connections were cut during COVID. It takes a huge amount of energy and effort to successfully grow food, and to not be certain of connecting crops with willing buyers must be heartbreaking. Strengthening local food networks in our valley cushions our community from national food shortages.

As an employee at the Grassroots Garden, we had to close to drop in volunteers in March. Many of our volunteers relied on Grassroots produce to augment their grocery budget, as all volunteers are invited to share in the harvest. I heard personal stories from many people who miss the garden and who feel like their nutrition is suffering because organic produce is expensive! The food offered at pantries is not often organic and doesn't always allow for much choice and agency. Inviting people to take part in Double Up programs is very motivating in getting folks to shop at farmer's markets over buying imported vegetables from grocery stores. It also empowers people by allowing them to choose what they want for meals.

Thank you for the consideration, thank you for listening.
Angel Barclay, Eugene, OR