

Submitter: Abigail Gustke

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services

Measure: HB2728

February 6th 2023

RE: Written Testimony for Double Up Food Bucks in Oregon

Dear House Committee on Early Childhood and Human Services,

My name is Abigail Gustke and I am a community member who resides in Central Oregon and works in the nonprofit sector coordinating programs that combat food insecurity.

I am writing to express my strong support for continued state funding for the Double Up Food Bucks (DUFEB) program. Not only does it keep money in local economies, but it supports Oregon farmers while also improving the nutrition of low-income families and individuals.

In Central Oregon, there are several farmers' markets and brick-and-mortar businesses that accept DUFEB and their ability to offer this program to SNAP participants has a drastic, positive impact on our community's ability to access farm fresh, local produce. In 2022 at the Bend Farmers Market alone, approx. \$18,000 of additional revenue made its way to local farms and businesses. This program directly supports and uplifts our local agricultural economy in Central Oregon.

Additionally, by enabling SNAP participants to purchase quality, locally produced food with high nutritional value, DUFEB plays an important role in improving the access to food that combats diet-related diseases. With state funding, this program can continue to combat the disproportionate epidemic of diet-related diseases, like heart disease, experienced by those in our communities that also experience food insecurity.

Lastly, with the increased cost of food due to inflation and the loss of emergency SNAP benefits coming in March, the DUFEB program will prove to be instrumental in the ability of members of our community to continue to access fresh fruits and vegetables. Without this supplemental program, those experiencing a lack of access to food will be further impacted in their ability to provide nutritious, affordable, and culturally appropriate food. According to Friends of Family Farmers, "Double Up users don't just eat more produce than the average SNAP participants. They eat more produce than the average American."

Maintaining access to healthy food, combating inflation and SNAP reductions, and

retaining local money in the agricultural economy are all reasons why I would like to encourage your support for upcoming funding opportunities that would increase our community's access to fresh, local, and healthy food.

Sincerely,

Abigail Gustke

Community Food Access Coordinator | The High Desert Food and Farm Alliance