

Submitter: Meghan Verberkmoes

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services

Measure: HB2728

Chair Reynolds, Vice Chairs Nguyen and Scharf, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Meghan Verberkmoes. I am a farmers market manager in Eugene. I am writing to request your support for HB 2728.

HB 2728 supports the expansion of Double Up Food Bucks Oregon, a SNAP matching program with a proven record of success. For every dollar spent on SNAP-eligible foods at participating farmers markets, farm stands, CSA programs, and grocery stores across the state, shoppers will receive an additional dollar to spend on Oregon-grown fruits and vegetables.

This program is important to me because for several years I have seen firsthand the incredible impact it has had on our farmers market, our local farmers, and our community. The Double Up Food Bucks program empowers SNAP participants to choose healthy foods, it has substantially increased sales for our farmers, and has expanded our customer base. The program has brought so many people to the market that had never shopped at a farmers market before, and has made them 'regulars'. We hear at the market, over and over again, what a difference this program makes in our customers' ability to buy locally grown foods, and how DUFB allows them to try new fruits and vegetables, and increases their overall consumption of healthy food. Our community members are proud to be able to support local farmers, and DUFB has made that possible for so many more people in the community.

In 2021 the amount of Double Up Food Bucks distributed at our market nearly doubled. And we saw a significant increase in DUFB distribution again in 2022, which was our biggest year ever for SNAP/DUFB distribution. Our community, both shoppers and farmers, have come to rely on this program as an important source of healthy food, and an important source of income. As we see inflation and the cost of food rising, this program is more important than ever.

We have received so much positive feedback from SNAP shoppers at our farmers market about the benefits of DUFB. Some comments from customer surveys:

- “Double Up Food Bucks has made a significant difference in my life by allowing me to obtain fresh produce I could not otherwise afford. It has a profound secondary benefit in that I suffer from depression & PTSD, and it forces me to get out and interact with others in a warm and positive environment. Seriously big difference in

my health and outlook. Thanks so much!!!”

•“I'm able to have healthier food to feed myself and son. Thank you for doing this.”

•“It has improved my motivation to buy healthy food. I have to come to the market to get the extra dollar, but also, coming to the market has become a habit I thoroughly enjoy. I would no longer want to miss coming to the market. I've made a lot of new friends at the market too and I am overall healthier & happier all around. Thank you farmers market!”

•“I am able to buy a lot more organic veggies & fruit that are fresher and a higher quality than what is in the stores. As a result, I am feeling better and have lost 10 lbs. this summer.”

•“We rely on Double Up for our produce. We cannot afford vegetables without double up. We went from buying at farmers markets 1 or 2x per year to 2x per week! Thank you Double Up!”

The Double Up Food Bucks program is vital to our farmers market and to our community, and we are dedicated to its continuation and success.

Thank you for the consideration and for your service.

Meghan Verberkmoes, Eugene