

Submitter: Darcie Spar

On Behalf
Of:

Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and
Water

Measure: HB3124

Chair Helm, Vice-chairs Hartman and Owens, and members of the committee:

My name is Darcie Spar and I am a dedicated farmers market customer and Board member of Oregon Farmers Markets Association (OFMA) from Tigard. I enthusiastically encourage you to support HB 3124, especially components 4-7 and 4-8. This bill will strengthen our local food systems in the face of the ongoing drought and other climate driven challenges.

Component 4-7: This component - which allocates \$3M for a drought resilience and relief program through the Oregon Community Food Systems Network (OCFSN) - is a critical piece that will complement ODAP program funding for continued disaster and drought relief through ODA. It will provide grants (vs. forgivable loans) to small, new, and BIPOC farmers who face barriers to accessing the ODAP program. The program builds on past success, with the equitable, thoughtful, and thorough distribution by OCFSN of \$1.5M from the state in 2022.

Component 4-8: This component supports the valuable role of farmers markets and food hubs in mitigating the impact of drought and increasing natural disasters in Oregon. Farmers markets are important community hubs, offer economic opportunities to local farmers, and maintain a constant community access point for local food. They help bridge the supply chain gap for local communities, providing reliable, affordable and nutritious food.

In Oregon alone, farmers markets support more than 6,900 small, local farmers and artisans; welcome more than 3.2 million visitors annually; and bring an influx of more than \$61 million to our communities. Additionally, farmers markets across Oregon were responsible for supporting an estimated 24,000 jobs last year throughout the state in an especially challenging time for the labor economy.

Many farmers markets accept SNAP benefits, and also have SNAP matching programs, such as Double Up Food Bucks. In 2021 there were over \$1.6 million in SNAP sales at Oregon farmers markets! This is a truly valuable resource at a time when the need for food assistance is increasing with the end of pandemic emergency benefits, the rise of inflation, and the continued struggles with the ongoing economic impact of COVID.

This component will support the Oregon Farmers Markets Association's continued work in supporting farmers markets in taking SNAP, offering technical assistance, and paying for equipment and software necessary to accept and process food assistance benefits.

Thank you for considering these important investments in creating strong local food systems throughout our beautiful state!

Darcie Spar