

April, 8, 2023



Senator Steiner and Representative Sanchez,

My name is Eecole Copen. I am a farmers market manager and registered dietitian in Portland, Oregon. I am writing to request your support for **HB 2728**. The bill is currently in the Joint Ways & Means Committee, and I urge you to take action to fund this bill before the Legislature adjourns.

**HB 2728** 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 stands, grocery stores, and CSAs across the state, shoppers will receive an additional dollar to spend on Oregon-grown fruits and vegetables.

The cost of food increased by over 10% in 2022, which impacted communities already facing disparities the hardest. Double Up Food Bucks is a perfect investment as we work to stabilize Oregon post-pandemic, serving an immediate need of feeding people while investing in local farmers and local economies - an incredible triple win.

At our farmers market last year, we saw a doubling in the use of SNAP at our market. With more people unemployed or working from home, there were more users of SNAP coming from the neighborhood than ever before. In part I think that folks were greatly incentivized to come to the market to use their SNAP because of the \$20 DUFB match. Our match distribution and redemption more than doubled from previous years. As both a dietitian and a market manager, this helps me do my job in so many ways. Getting folks to use their SNAP at a farmers market helps increase the demand for locally grown and produced goods. It supports my local farmers and business owners while at the same time, makes getting fresh fruit and veggies to the customer the easy and affordable choice. Low income families get to take home nutritious food for free! As you can imagine, my dietitian heart is delighted by all of this! We occasionally provide recipes for the veggie of the week in our newsletters to help folks figure out creative uses for their produce. I think farmers markets are an amazing community resource for folks wanting the opportunity to be in a healthy environment that supports healthy choices and supports the local economy. Not only do they provide a place to buy produce and local goods and get useful information through community vendors and e-newsletters, but they also provide a social atmosphere that is joyful, colorful and playful. People really need this kind of

uplifting social environment, especially after the isolation of the pandemic. So, the increased match of Double Up Food Bucks is not only helping people but helping support the entire structure of farmers markets and all they can offer their communities.

Now more than ever, especially after the pandemic SNAP dollars have gone away, folks will be feeling the financial crunch. These next few years, low income families will need more financial support and incentives like DUFB will become even more precious. Farmers also need this support. Oregon needs farmers to stay in business, and these kinds of programs make a major financial difference to them. And.. for farmers markets to stay in business, it needs to make financial sense for the farmers to be there. As mentioned earlier, DUFB offers so many wins- for the local farming community, for low income families wanting to eat more fruits and veggies and for the local economy and farmers markets across the state.

Please consider supporting **HB 2728**, and to fully fund the bill before the Oregon Legislature adjourns.

Thank you for your consideration and your service.

Sincerely,  
Eecole Copen  
OHSU Farmers Market  
Portland