



Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 5526
Joint Committee on Ways & Means
April 16, 2025

Dear Co-Chair Lieber, Co-Chair Sanchez and members of the committee,

My name is Rachael Ward and I am the Executive Director of the Farmers Market Fund. I am asking you to support continued funding for the Double Up Food Bucks program within the Department of Human Services agency budget (SB 5526).

Farmers Market Fund is a small nonprofit dedicated to increasing access to fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables for Oregonians. The primary way we do this is through the [Double Up Food Bucks program](#), which matches the value of SNAP benefits for the purchase of fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables at 216 farmers markets, farm stands, small grocers, and Community Supported Agriculture sites across the state. Submitted as testimony, you can find more information about Double Up and a map of where the program is offered.

With Double Up, for every dollar of SNAP spent at participating outlets, shoppers receive an additional dollar of Double Up Food Bucks to spend on Oregon-grown fruits and vegetables, essentially cutting the cost of produce in half! Double Up helps low-income shoppers stretch the value of their food benefits, making it easier to buy fresh produce, and connecting them to community resources, all while supporting Oregon's farmers and small businesses. **This program is a triple win:** it helps low-income shoppers bring home more fruits and vegetables and gives family farmers a financial boost, all while supporting local economies.

FMF and our partners at Pacific Northwest CSA Coalition and Oregon Food Bank have worked hard over the last 13 years to grow the impact and reach of this program. Much of this growth has been possible due to state investments, which we have been able to leverage to secure matching federal funds. Most recently, the \$4.16M Double Up was awarded in the 2023 biennium was used to secure a matching federal grant for over \$5M.

Double Up is both a solid investment and an economic driver. We have a long way to go to reach the maximum potential of this program. Submitted as written testimony, you will find the Executive Summary from a recent economic impact assessment, conducted by an independent consultant group. I want to share a few highlights from this assessment:



- Nearly \$5.5M in SNAP and Double Up dollars were redeemed at participating sites last year, representing a direct re-routing of federal SNAP dollars into the pockets of small scale farmers, local businesses, and small-scale economies.
- Double Up helps shoppers stretch their budgets, freeing up money from their own pockets that would have been spent on food to go towards other essentials like housing, utilities, child care, and medical bills.
- **Over \$6M in Oregon labor income** was created in 2024 due to the additional spending that Double Up made possible.
- Double Up is a highly cost effective health care intervention, with participants **eating more fruits and vegetables than the average American** and reporting improvements to their physical, mental, and social health.
- Double Up dollars redeemed in 2024 alone created up to **\$8.8M in avoided healthcare costs** over a participant's lifetime.
- If all Oregon households eligible for SNAP participated in Double Up, **redemptions could total \$259M, more than 100 times the current program size.** This is truly a program where you reap what you sow: there is a direct relationship between the funds invested and the impact on the community!

Oregon has the highest SNAP participation rates nationwide, with nearly 100% of eligible residents enrolled. **This robust SNAP participation makes nutrition incentives like Double Up Food Bucks particularly impactful at addressing the rising food insecurity in our state.** Last year, our retail partners saw a 25% increase in customer traffic. As food prices grow and COVID era SNAP allotments end, demand for Double Up is rising. We need the state's investment to maintain and expand this program.

On a personal level, I have been on all sides of this program- as a shopper using SNAP, a farmers market manager, a grower vending at the market, administering the program at the state level, and providing training and technical assistance to programs like these across the country. I can say with confidence and as a public health professional that this program is one of the best, tangible interventions I have ever seen to change the way people eat, reroute dollars into local economies, and still make sure farmers can make a living.

More than 375 community members, farmers, small businesses, and food systems advocates have recently expressed support for Double Up (see submitted sign-on letter as testimony), with many of them sharing personal stories about what Double Up means to them. Of all the stories shared, a few to highlight are:

Coos Head Food Co-op, Patrick Franks, General Manager, S 2nd St Coos Bay, 97420 *"The coastal community of Coos Bay/North Bend has been struggling for decades with stagnant economic growth and few job opportunities outside the food service and tourism industries, leaving many*



folks with very few options to provide their family with an income. Additionally, the demographics of our community skew towards senior citizens on fixed incomes. It is more important than ever to provide our most vulnerable citizens access to healthy food options. The Double Up Food Buck program has been a lifeline for these vulnerable families in my community that only want to provide healthy options of fruit and vegetables to their kids, parents, and for themselves. Like many rural towns, healthcare is going away. Encouraging the most vulnerable citizens of our community to eat more fruits and vegetables will help to lower their risk of developing chronic illnesses. Please keep this program funded so my community can not just survive, but find a path to thriving by staying healthy and well nourished."

Comida KIN farmers market vendor: Rodrigo Huerta - Forest Grove 97116. *"I've seen people make the conscious decision to buy more fresh vegetables and locally made products because they had the extra allowance. I've also seen them return to vendors with their own money to buy produce and products that they were very happy with. Double up food bucks allows customers to try something they wouldn't try because of finance limitations. Customers naturally return to these products knowing the importance of their health and how buying and consuming fresh produce and locally made products make them feel. Double up food bucks opens the door for them."*

Bonanza Farmers Market: Stacia Roberts, Market Manager. Bonanza, OR 97623. *"The double up program is important to me and my community because through DUFb community members have been able to provide their families with more fresh produce and even learn to grow their own by being able to purchase plant starts for growing vegetables. The produce vendors at our market are gaining more income allowing them to expand their farms and provide for their families."*

Double Up means that more Oregonians are sitting down to dinner tables full of fresh food, small farmers are being compensated for feeding hungry people, and our local economies are growing more resilient. I hope you will join us in maintaining and expanding funding for Double Up Food Bucks within the Oregon Department of Human Services's Self Sufficiency budget (SB 5526).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rachael Ward". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Rachael Ward
Executive Director, Farmers Market Fund
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