

To the Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Bradley Melaugh, and I am an employee of Village Market, a partner organization piloting the Double Up Food Bucks program in a grocery store. I am writing share my strong support for **HB 2292**, and hope that you will amplify my and others' support for this vital program.

HB 2292 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 share programs, and grocery stores across the state, shoppers will receive a dollar to spend on Oregon-grown fruits and vegetables.

As one of the first grocery store partners for Double Up Food Bucks, the past 8 months of DUFB at our store has shown the pressing existing need for increased support to form healthy food purchasing habits. Anecdotes and user data have demonstrated that the benefit that a program like DUFB has far-reaching impacts on the families of participating neighbors. In a community continually finding ways to thrive in the face of ongoing structural economic, racial, and social barriers, a program like DUFB extends SNAP dollars in a vital way.

Located in New Columbia, Oregon's largest affordable housing development, Village Market is an important food hub in the community where people can depend on a familiar face to connect them to neighborhood food resources. Village Market makes a concerted effort to make healthy food decisions more accessible. DUFB has become an integral piece of Village Market's efforts to slightly ease the financial burden that so often accompanies purchasing fresh fruits and veggies for low income residents in our community. Village Market, a non-profit grocery store, has been sourcing donations and grants to reduce the price of fruits and veggies for qualifying customers for years, demonstrating that people will buy more fruits and veggies when the financial burden is reduced.

It is well known that the COVID-19 pandemic is negatively impacting low income communities and communities of color at a disproportionate rate to the overall population. The demographic makeup of the neighborhood that Village Market serves is such that most of our customers are experiencing compounding health and financial hardships during this pandemic. The DUFB program has been an incredibly important tool in extending our customers' SNAP dollars through this difficult time. As a very small store, Village Market is distributing \$580 in DUFB per month on average, with the highest month at over \$1,000.

Village Market is unique in that it is intimately connected to two neighborhood food growing projects, through Village Gardens, the non-profit organization that supports the store. The neighborhood community garden and community orchard produce thousands of pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables, the bulk of which go directly home with the neighborhood growers to their families. A considerable portion of the harvest from communally run spaces in the garden and orchard are on sale at Village Market throughout the summer. The Double Up Food Bucks program, through it's SNAP extension mechanism, allows neighbors to purchase fresh fruits and veggies that were grown less than a half a mile away by their neighbors. This money, in turn, goes to support the operations of the garden and orchard. DUFB is integral to keeping the cycle of neighborhood dollars supporting neighborhood projects alive.

We look forward to continued support from the state for this important initiative to keep Double Up Food Bucks flowing to the community members who need it most. Thank you for the consideration and for your service,

Bradley Melaugh
Community Engagement Coordinator
Village Gardens, Village Market
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