

TO: HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES
FROM: Mason Durfee, Double Up Food Bucks Program Coordinator
RE: SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 2292
DATE: March 2, 2021



Chair Williams and Members of the Committee,

My name is Mason Durfee. I am a Double Up Food Bucks Coordinator at Oregon Food Bank, a former SNAP recipient, and former participant of Double Up Food Bucks. I reside in Portland, Oregon and I am writing to request your support for HB 2292. On a personal level, this program impacted my ability to regain economic stability and maintain my personal health and wellbeing during times of unemployment as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Prior to the pandemic, 1 in 11 Oregonians were food insecure. **Today, nearly 1 in 5 people in our communities face hunger — a dramatic increase.** And the public health and economic impacts of the pandemic have fallen hardest on people who have faced systemic inequities for generations: communities of color, immigrants and refugees, single parents and caregivers, and our trans and gender non-conforming neighbors.

As the Double Up Food Bucks Coordinator at Oregon Food Bank, I now have the opportunity to support this programming as a person who has lived experience with hunger. With this lived experience as a guide, I join Oregon Food Bank in its mission to eliminate hunger and its root causes. We pursue this goal in two key ways: we foster community connections to help people access nutritious food today; and we build community power to dismantle systems and policies that drive hunger and poverty.

We have the opportunity to rebuild and emerge stronger so that we can end hunger for good in our communities. This is our moment to embrace our shared values, care for each other and take bold action in support of *all* Oregonians.

Double Up Food Bucks: An Essential Investment in Public Health and Our Local Economies

Oregon Food Bank is honored and excited to partner with the Farmers Market Fund, Pacific Northwest Community Supported Agriculture Coalition, Oregon Farmers Markets Association and the American Heart Association to increase access to fresh Oregon-grown produce to food insecure individuals and underserved communities. House Bill 2292 provides critical funding to support the continued expansion of the SNAP Double Up Food Bucks (DUFB) program to farmers markets and grocery stores across the state. DUFB will provide additional funds directly to SNAP users, thereby increasing affordability and access to Oregon-grown produce from farmers markets, CSAs and grocery stores in underserved communities.

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State funds from the 2019 Session launched a pilot to implement DUFB at independent grocery stores across the state. In spite of the challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic, we successfully launched DUFB in 8 store locations across 7 counties. The pilot worked to develop point-of-sale-technology solutions with four regional tech providers enabling DUFB to seamlessly integrate in the check-out process at grocery stores, easing the SNAP shopper experience and building capacity for retailers to operate the program seven days a week. In the close of this budget year the DUFB program will have supported Oregon families in purchasing \$250,000 of the fruits and vegetables they want and need.

In the next calendar year, Oregon Food Bank is focused on expanding this program to 25+ stores across 15+ counties with a targeted focus on locations that are culturally specific, stores owned by and serving communities of color and rural retailers serving within a food desert. At a time when food insecurity in Oregon has nearly doubled since the beginning of the pandemic, according to a recent report from OSU Policy Analysis Laboratory (OPAL), this is a critical time for continued investment in programs like Double Up Food Bucks.

An estimated one in four Oregonians experienced food insecurity in 2020 – the highest rate in a century. The pandemic has brought hunger and poverty to the doorsteps of thousands of Oregon families for the first time, and the situation is even worse in communities that have faced disproportionate challenges for generations. Double Up Food Bucks provides an opportunity to support these communities, as well as Oregon farmers and local economies – an incredible triple win.

The continued expansion of the SNAP Double Up Food Bucks program through House Bill 2292 is an incredible opportunity for Oregon to address three important goals: reducing hunger; supporting families, farmers and economies; and promoting public health. At a critical time when an estimated 25% of Oregonians are food insecure, Oregon Food Bank greatly appreciates your consideration and support of the Double Up Food Bucks program.

Thank you,

Mason Durfee
Portland, OR
Double Up Food Bucks Program Coordinator
Oregon Food Bank

