

Co-Chairs Senator Johnson, Senator Steiner Hayward, Representative Rayfield, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Julia Wentzel. I am a resident and former manager of a local food store in Tillamook, Oregon. I am writing to request your support for **SB 555**.

SB 555 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.

I work directly with the small farmers of Tillamook and Clatsop Counties. The Double Up Food Bucks program directs state funds into the hands of small farmers, supporting our local economy and strengthening our local food system, all while increasing the buying power of low-income families and increasing access to healthful food choices.

When the Covid-10 pandemic forced our local restaurants to close or slow, many of our local farmers lost their most reliable markets and had to reimagine their businesses overnight to stay afloat. With Double Up Food Bucks offered at many of the farmers markets and local food stores on the north coast, residents have been able to double their purchasing power for local fruits and vegetables, which became a vital source of income for our farms.

DUFB also supported farmers who pivoted to a direct-to-consumer model by starting or increasing their Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) shares. In partnership with the Portland Area CSA Coalition, some local farmers were able to offer CSA shares to families who receive SNAP benefits for up to 50% off market value through a combination of DUFB and community funding. At a time when shopping at the grocery store suddenly felt unsafe, a number of families were able to turn to our local farms to source a large portion of their food purchases. For many low-income families, this would not have been possible without the Double Up Food Bucks program.

The pandemic has exacerbated the food insecurity many Oregon families face, and has increased the challenges that our small-scale farms face every day. The Double Up Food Bucks program is a proven tool to help people access healthy food while supporting the local farms that are a crucial piece to supporting the resiliency of all members of our community. I ask you to support SB 555 as a commitment to sustaining our local food systems and promoting the health of our communities.

Thank you for your consideration and for your service.

Julia Wentzel
Tillamook, Oregon