

Chair Gelser and Members of the Committee,

My name is Laura Bennett. I am a Farmer and Farmers Market Coordinator based out of Philomath, Oregon. I am writing to request your support for **SB 440 & 555**.

SB 555 and SB 440 support 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.

When you decide to be a farmer, you do it because you care about your family's health, your community's health, and you do it sustainably because you care about the planet's health too. But over the years, what starts getting to you is the reality that small scale organic food costs more to produce—a lot more—and you have to charge more than what a lot of folks can afford just to stay in business. Oregon's farmers need your help. Sure, we donate to gleaner groups and offer payment plans, but that isn't the same as opening the door for hungry families to actively participate in their local food communities. Double Up Food Bucks opens those doors.

The Double Up Food Bucks program didn't exist when we first started farming thirty years ago, and watching it unfold, the impact was immediate. People were pouring into our booths that we'd never seen before, mothers with their children excited about vegetables for the first time, DUFB cards in hand. Those moments are why we farm, and why we need your support.

Moreover, COVID-19 has only exacerbated the need for the DUFB program. Food costs even more to produce now than it did before. The increased sanitization procedures and social distancing precautions that we had to adapt on farm and at markets for the safety of our employees and customers—all of that costs money. And with restaurants that went out of business and aren't buying anymore, income has dropped. On the consumer's end, people are experiencing extreme economic hardship as well, hindering access to fresh food even further, at a time when staying healthy is of the utmost importance.

But DUFB really works to bridge that gap, as we saw this past year. In 2019, 6% of our farm's market sales were from DUFB. But in 2020 when funding was expanded for DUFB in response to the pandemic, that percentage jumped up to 14%. This is a program that not only works, but is essential, both for small businesses and our communities, and we need your support now more than ever to ensure that it keeps working. So many people wouldn't be able to access healthy food for their families without Double Up Food Bucks, and during this pandemic especially, we have to take care of each other. We will do our part and grow the food, but we need this support to keep our communities healthy, now more than ever. Double Up Food Bucks is the bridge from farm to table getting fresh Oregon produce to the families that need it most.

Thank you for the consideration and for your service.

Laura Bennett—*Philomath, Oregon*