

Chair Reynolds, Vice Chairs Nguyen and Scharf, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Brian Lepore. I am a resident, shopper and former farmer and vendor at Bend and Northwest Crossing (also in Bend) farmer's markets. I am writing to request your support for **HB 2728**.

HB 2728 supports the expansion of Double Up Food Bucks Oregon, a SNAP matching program with a proven record of success. For every dollar spent on SNAP-eligible foods at participating farmers markets, farm stands, CSA programs, and grocery stores across the state, shoppers will receive an additional dollar to spend on Oregon-grown fruits and vegetables.

This program is important to me because I know first hand that getting nutritious food onto the plates of our neighbors regardless of their socioeconomic status is a high priority of members of the Central Oregon local food production system. Small, local, direct-market farmers, who are the majority of vendors at farmer's markets, work extremely hard to produce the most nutritious foods with the lowest possible negative environmental impacts.

Unfortunately, however, our higher costs of production mean that our prices can be higher than many community members with lower incomes can afford. Yet, there are few experiences as rewarding as handing a freshly harvested head of lettuce or a locally raised leg of lamb to someone using DUFB who is so excited to be receiving food of the absolute highest quality directly from the people who produced it. The DUFB program does not just provide very important nutrition. It helps provide connection to our community. It provides connection to our land and the natural resources we manage.

In a time when mental health challenges, social isolation and homelessness are the major issues facing Oregonians, any program that undermines those challenges must be supported, particularly when it is providing essential nutrition at the same time. And all of this is of heightened importance considering the rises in food prices over the last few years. I hope you'll support HB2728 to help strengthen our local food systems, create a more resilient food system and more connected communities.

Thank you for the consideration and for your service.

Brian Lepore
Owner of Golden Eagle Organics
Bend, OR