

Submitter: Amy Scholze

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services

Measure: HB2728

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

My name is Amy Scholze. I am a resident of The Dalles, Oregon. I am also on the board of directors for the Farmers Market Fund. I am writing to request your support for HB 2728.

HB 2728 supports the expansion of Double Up Food Bucks Oregon (DUFBO), a SNAP matching program with a proven track 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 while I am no longer a SNAP benefits user, I have seen the impact DUFBO has made on our grocery bill. We were able to use P-EBT funds because we live in an area where 100% of children receive free school lunch benefits. With March's emergency SNAP benefits reduction this year, we will see an increased need for families that rely on SNAP benefits to feed their children.

I am also a worker in both Hood River and Wasco Counties which provides wraparound support for individuals and families who have no other support while in COVID isolation. Many of these people relied on SNAP benefits as a main source of income for their grocery bills, and while doing the grocery shopping for families, I very acutely saw the costs of inflation throughout 2021 until now. More personally, in my family, I see how a reduction in SNAP benefits has caused extreme stress and worry in a relative who has taken on raising her grandchildren while disabled and managing a cancer diagnosis. If more people were aware of and utilized these benefits, shopping at a farmers market for fresh local produce using DUFBO could help them offset the skyrocketing costs of other grocery staples like eggs and meat.

Speaking of offsetting costs of buying fresh produce, markets that reported implementing the DUFBO program at their local markets had also shown benefits to farmers and ranchers whose products would not qualify for DUFBO, indicating that shoppers felt comfortable spending more of the SNAP dollars at the local market and keeping that money within the community. Farmers Market Fund is also currently undergoing an economic impact report, one of the first of its kind for a program like DUFBO.

One of our vendors noticed that DUFBO users were more likely to purchase unusual

fruits or vegetables to try them out with their children, something that likely would not have happened without that additional benefits cushion. Personally, our family discovered quince as a new-to-us fruit that the whole family enjoyed, and now regularly set aside some of our grocery money at the end of the year to purchase a large amount of quince to cook fresh, into jam, combine with other fruits into our own homemade fruit leathers, or a delicious sliceable quince paste called membrillo. Without DUFb it is unlikely I would have spent that money purchasing a fruit I knew little about, and turns out is now a family favorite!

Thank you for the consideration, and for your service,
Amy Scholze, The Dalles, OR