

Testimony in Support of House Bill 2728
House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services
February 8, 2023

Chair Reynolds & members of the committee, for the record my name is Ivonne Rivero and I have lived in Portland, Oregon for several decades. I am a Community Engagement Liaison and a Community Advocate working with the Latinx communities of Oregon. I had the privilege of being an Ambassador for the Double Up Food Bucks program and I served primarily with bilingual families, elders, youth and students who receive SNAP.

In the two years that I served as an Ambassador for the Double Up Food Bucks program, I helped families and individuals connect to these resources in the face of the many challenges posed by the pandemic. Amidst food shortages and rising food prices, this program was critical for supporting SNAP families to afford healthy food while also covering other important expenses like medical care and housing. Many in the community experienced the uncertainty of losing jobs and their incomes and the stability of a weekly paycheck. In some families both mother and father and the eldest son were out of work, as many in the community were employed in the restaurant and service industries. We began seeing families lacking not only their incomes, but the staples necessary to keep a family of 5 or up to 7 fed and housed.

And these struggles continue - low income families, especially seniors and folks with disabilities who often live on fixed incomes, face multiple challenges with access to employment, housing, and transportation. All of these factors have put more strain on a household's total food budget and ability to afford healthier options which are often more expensive. Soon SNAP Emergency allotments will end, and programs like Double Up will be even more important for supporting folks to not only have enough food, but sufficient, healthy food to eat.

In my own life, I have seen first hand how having access is essential to both physical and mental health. Programs and incentives for fresh,

Oregon-grown foods like DUFB promote health and well-being at all ages. Children, teenagers, pregnant women and the elderly benefit from the DUFB program.

People in my community eat primarily a healthy diet, but as people become more American and their diet and food choices change, they begin to show the health outcomes that we see in the general population.

With the recent addition of locations like El Torito Supermarket in Marion County, families receiving support from SNAP can access their favorite cultural staples, including vegetables like tomatillos and chiles which are all part of a rich food tradition. What would more funding mean for DUFB? It would mean expanding to even more regions in Oregon, but also that people have access to what is most meaningful to them. Food is sustenance, food is culture, and our identity.

I ask for your support for HB 2728. Not only for the preservation of this program, but for its expansion to address the challenges experienced by the working people of Oregon, especially as we move into recovery from the pandemic.

Thank you members of the committee.

Ivonne Rivero
Double Up Food Bucks Ambassador 2021 & 2022
Portland, Oregon