

My name is Rachael Ward, and I live in District 4. I'm here today to speak in support of House Bill 2728, which funds the Double Up Food Bucks program. Double Up matches SNAP benefits, dollar for dollar at farmers markets, CSA farms, and grocery stores across the state. Shoppers swipe their Oregon Trail card and get matching dollars for the purchase of Oregon-grown fruits and vegetables, helping to eliminate one of the biggest barriers to eating healthy: PRICE! Double Up is a triple win: it helps low-income families eat healthy, provides revenue for local farmers, and keeps federal dollars in our local economy.

This program is near & dear to my heart because I've been on all sides of it and I can say that it is truly life changing. As a former recipient of SNAP, a farmers market manager, statewide program administrator, national technical assistance provider, and now the Executive Director of Farmers Market Fund (who administers the program) there is so much I could tell you about the impact this program has had on my life and my career. But I'll try to stay within the time limit!

When my partner and I were both laid off from our jobs at the same time, SNAP and Double Up were there to make sure we didn't have to sacrifice the quality of our diets even as we struggled to pay our bills. National research shows that Double Up helps shoppers eat more produce than the average American. When I managed a small farmers market in a major refugee resettlement area of Atlanta I saw the impact a Double Up equivalent program had on a community called the most diverse square mile in the US. Not only did it help new Americans fleeing war and persecution to have access to local, culturally relevant produce, the funds from this program meant a source of steady revenue for our farmers, many of them new Americans themselves. All of those federal dollars that stayed locally helped to strengthen the local economy of a small, economically depressed town. We know that for every \$1 of Double Up Food Bucks spent, it contributes \$2.50 to the local economy.

For 4 years I administered a similar program to Double Up across the state of Georgia. During that time I saw again and again the power of this program to bring together rural and urban areas, diversify farmers markets, and funnel federal dollars into the local economy. This program takes a lot of hard work to manage and the people doing it are farmers market and store managers, many who are volunteers or underpaid themselves. It is truly a labor of love. Making this program successful requires continual funding and state support.

Most recently, I helped to create the Nutrition Incentive Hub, a national coalition that provides training and technical assistance to programs like Double Up across the country. From my experience looking at these programs across the country I can tell you that Oregon is a leader in the nation when it comes to this work. Other states are looking to us to lead the way. If programs like Double Up were brought up to scale in every state it would contribute about \$3.2 Billion dollars to the country's economy, and create over 22,000 jobs EVERY YEAR.

Today I am proud to be the Executive Director of Farmers Market Fund, the nonprofit entity that administers Double Up in Oregon. I know that the approval of these state funds would mean that we are able to secure \$4 million in matching federal funds through the USDA's Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP). But most importantly, these funds mean that

more Oregonians are sitting down to dinner tables full of fresh food, small farmers are being compensated for feeding hungry people, and our local economies are growing more and more resilient. In the face of inflation and cuts to SNAP benefits it is more important than ever that we fully fund HB 2728 and the Double Up Food Bucks program. Thank you.