

Submitter: Lisa Hebert
On Behalf Of: Montavilla Farmers Market
Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2979

Dear Co-Chair Helm, Co-Chair Owens, and Members of the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Wildfire,

My name is Lisa Hebert, and I am a Farmers Market Executive Director from Portland, OR. I am writing to strongly support HB 2979, and urge continued investment in Oregon's farmers markets, which serve as critical infrastructure for local economies, small farms, and food access programs.

Farmers markets are experiencing extreme weather. Heat waves, wildfires, droughts, and storms disrupt operations and threaten vendors. We need this funding to respond to these challenges and ensure markets remain open, accessible, and sustainable.

The Farmers Market Climate Resilience Grant Fund and SNAP support grants have been lifelines, helping markets upgrade infrastructure, implement cooling and smoke mitigation strategies, and expand SNAP/Double Up Food Bucks programs. But demand far exceeds available funding—grant requests would have required more than double the resources Oregon Farmers Market Association (OFMA) has to distribute. Without renewed investment, farmers markets will struggle to continue serving their communities.

These programs impact me personally because our market has experienced many days of extreme weather which has negatively impacted the sales of local farms and food businesses. Closing completely or early due to heat and/or smoke is devastating to food access in our community and the sustainability of the small businesses we host. We need more support to create an adaptable market during these climate related events. Montavilla Farmers Market received an OFMA Climate Resilience Grant in 2024, a great starting point to help our market create the infrastructure it needs to withstand climate related events. This grant has helped us buy supplies such as heaters, umbrellas, misters, and gravel to help with erosion for our location. Because of the limited funding, we were only granted partial funding, indicating there is a lot more support needed for our market and other markets who didn't receive any funding.

This bill also supports SNAP acceptance and matching at our market. Our community relies heavily on matching their SNAP benefits at the farmers markets (we distributed almost \$60,000 in matching currency, Double Up Food Bucks, in 2024 alone). This

program increases their access to local, fresh fruits and vegetables while supporting small farms. This is a lifeline to many of our neighbors struggling with food security. Supporting this program means creating a more accessible program for all people in our neighborhood. Past Growth Grants we've received have helped our market create translated documents and way-finding signs for folks who are more comfortable reading a non-english language. These grants also pay for staff to execute the program, a necessary aspect as the reconciliation process is lengthy. If we want to keep this program running at our market and continue to lower barriers to access, supported is needed through this bill.

OFMA and FMF can leverage state funds to match federal funding, strengthening our farmers markets and local food systems. We cannot afford to fall behind. Please support HB 2979 to keep our markets strong, our farmers supported, and our communities fed.

Thank you,
Lisa Hebert
Montavilla Farmers Market
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