



February 3, 2025

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

My name is Darren Gooch, and I am the Director of Development for the Sunset Empire Park & Recreation District in Seaside, Oregon. Our park district has operated the Seaside Farmer's Market for the last twelve years. 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 across the region are experiencing extreme weather. Heat waves, wildfires, droughts, and storms that 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 like ours upgrade infrastructure, implement inclement weather strategies, and expand our SNAP/Double Up Food Bucks programs. But demand far exceeds available funding—grant requests would have required more than double the resources OFMA has to distribute. Without renewed investment, farmers markets will struggle to continue serving their communities.

These programs impact our market directly because:

- Of closures due to wind and rain.
- Of challenges in accepting SNAP. This is very important considering the high number of people in our area depending on the SNAP and DUFB program to combat food insecurity.
- Of the Need for infrastructure improvements.
- We recently received an OFMA Climate Resilience Grant and an FMF Growth Fund Grant, both of which are helping our market develop an Inclement Weather Plan this year and providing much needed SNAP matching funds for our most vulnerable folks.

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,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "D Gooch". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Darren Gooch, Director of Development
Sunset Empire Park & Recreation District—Seaside Farmer's Market
1120 Broadway St, Seaside, OR 97138