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

My name is Eecole Copen and I am a farmers market manager and Registered Dietitian from Portland. 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 OFMA has to distribute. Without renewed investment, farmers markets will struggle to continue serving their communities.

These programs impact me personally because as a farmers market manager that functions through the hospital and university, we have many patients, students, employees and neighbors in and around the OHSU community that depend on SNAP and the matching Double Up Food Bucks program to help them afford fresh, locally grown produce. Making these foods available to low-income customers allows health care providers to be able to provide actual solutions to increasing accessibility to healthy choices. As a dietitian who cares very deeply about

making sure everyone can eat a colorful plate filled with nutrients and fiber that make the eating and daily living experience more pleasurable, functional and nutritious, I see how crucial these funds are for helping support the well being of our customers. Plus there are mental health benefits of being at a welcoming market and engaging socially for folks who often feel isolated. And of course, the support it gives to our local farmers is yet another win this program offers. It is really a triple win.. for patients, farmers and providers.

We also received a Growth Fund Grant last year that helped us staff our market booth with folks who were able to give personal attention to SNAP and DUFB recipients and we were able to send out postcards to the neighbors and created targeted marketing for patients and students who might benefit from DUFB. These funds were so incredibly helpful to our outreach and customer service!

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,

Eecole Copen, MS, RDN, LD

Registered Dietitian and Farmers Market Manager

OSHU Farmers Market

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