

Submitter: Chirona Silverstein

On Behalf Of:

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 Water,

My name is Chirona, and I am a People's Farmers' Market community member and volunteer 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.

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.

I volunteered at the farmer's market for 8 months during a stint of unemployment while I was also receiving SNAP benefits. In my time volunteering there, I was able to see the direct impact of the SNAP/Double Up Food Bucks program - it enables families living on a low income to shop local and build relationships with local farmers because their SNAP dollars go farther with the matching program. The People's Co-op Farmer's market became a beloved community and family for me during a time of instability. I saw the same people week after week and got to know them and their lives. They were able to come shop at this market because of these programs - it is a highlight of many people's weeks to attend the market, see their family, and purchase local organic produce with which to nourish themselves and their loved ones. It's a win for the individuals and the farmers to have these programs funded.

OFMA and Farmers Market Fund 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,
Chirona Silverstein
People's Farmers' Market
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