

Submitter: Paige Alleman

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 Paige, and I am a People's Farmers Market community member, and a regular visitor at many farmers markets around my town. I often go out of my way to visit and support the farms in our area of Oregon to source my groceries, and I always encourage my friends and family in the area to do the same. 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.

My local farmers market had this to say about these funds: "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 agree.

Farmers markets are the backbone of our state community. That may sound overstated, but consider how many people: friends, families, neighbors, take precious time out of their days to visit our local markets. When I go to the farmers market, I see a genuine expression of community. People get to know their favorite farmers. Children have the opportunity to learn about where their food comes from. Parents can make informed consumer choices about the nourishment they provide to their families. But perhaps most importantly, you see people outside and talking with each other and enjoying the bounty of our state. They exchange recipes and try new produce, organize and attend additional community events, and get involved with volunteering. They share stories and socialize. A space like this is an increasing rarity in today's world, and that makes these genuine, human connections between people formed in these places very special. This show of community is the very soul of our beautiful state.

Most notably, when our families spend their hard earned money at the farmers market, every single dollar goes to someone they might know, someone in their own community, someone who might also spend that dollar locally here in Oregon. A dollar spent at the farmers market pays for itself many times over in the local

economy. This is part of the reason its so easy to see the impact of the SNAP/DUFB program. This program not only helps families currently experiencing financial strain, but also does so in a way that boosts our local economy many times over. A dollar spent on this program causes far more impact than a lot of dollars spent elsewhere.

In my opinion, this program also helps struggling families financially for the long term. Through this program, I have seen struggling people form stronger connections with their community. They can eat healthy, nourishing food, and find community connections that can help them through a rough time. And their dollars are going directly to other Oregonians, not some grocery chain headquarters in a faraway state. This leads to better outcomes - not just for those families, but for the farmers and businesses they are able to support. Keeping these markets open is the best way for us to invest in our own communities.

I will add that personally, I love getting to know the hardest working people in our state and I will fight to support them at every turn, because their hard work is what feeds us all. Our farmers are crucial to all of our lives, and we should, as a community, be recognizing that extremely critical hard work with additional investment. Please support HB 2979 to keep our markets strong, our farmers supported, and our communities fed.

Thank you for your consideration and attention to this matter.

Kind regards,

Paige