

To the House of Representatives

RE: HB 2979

I have been a vendor at the Oakridge Farmer's Market for two years. I have shopped at many farmers' markets in two different states, and I know this is the smallest one I have ever seen. I can honestly say that if the grants and funding programs that the state provides through WOLFH do not continue, it will adversely affect our small community Farmer's Market.

Many people here have lower income, several live alone and struggle to make ends meet with their social security incomes. They rely on the SNAP & Double Up Food Bucks they receive to buy fresh produce, eggs and the like. These benefits at times allow them to purchase goods from my sourdough booth since they don't have to empty their wallets on other items. I wish the programs would allow people to buy good wholesome sourdough breads, but it is limited to only fruits and vegetables and protein.

At the end of the market, it is good to see that any remaining produce can be purchased at a fair price for the farmer and then distributed to our local Food Boxes. I have seen that line get long, and there are many grateful people who would be disappointed if this came to an end. It seems the best way to ensure that good quality food is going to feed people instead of getting thrown out.

I like the fact that we have local farmers bringing us high quality fruit and vegetables as our little town has been smoked out for the last 3 years growing seasons due to the forest fires and backburning. I try to grow veggies, but often my garden gets smoked out and quits producing. When we are suffering from the smoke, the vendors are allowed to hold the market indoors and they have air purifiers to help.

I have used some of these benefits as well because my husband & I are in the low-income category. The booth fee is very reasonable and when we have a lot of smoke, they have waived the fee. They provide us with a canopy that they have volunteers set up for us as we are not able to do those things without their help. It is nice to allow the helpers to receive "gratitude tokens" for their time and furthermore helps to support the vendors.

Many people who attend our market realize how amazing these benefits are, even if they don't need to take advantage of them. I don't think our community had enough time to respond to this urgent request. I hope the House Committee understands how important this funding is for our small community market and hope you will approve these programs 100%. Come up and see our little market sometime.

Thank you for your consideration.

Lady Sourdough

Jan Christensen