

Testimony Submission in support of HB 2979 - February 4, 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 Anna Curtin, and I live in Sandy, Clackamas County. I am a farmer, long-time farmers market employee, former market organizer, and Co-Chair of Oregon Farmers Markets Association. I write today in support of HB 2979, requesting continued investment in Oregon's farmers markets, which serve as critical infrastructure for local economies, small farms, and food access programs.

I know first hand that 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 successful.

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. As a grower, I have lost otherwise sellable product to unpredictable and wildly variable weather. Perishable crops are stunted in the field due to smoke and heat. Planting and sales opportunities are delayed due to flooding. The ability to staff market booths are strained by the competing need to be on-farm managing weather-related emergencies. Field and market labor are compromised due to concerns for health and safety of those working outside in unsafe conditions. I have represented a spectrum of vendors - diversified vegetable growers, orchardists, cheese makers, bakeries and other value added producers - and can state with certainty that each market day lost is revenue lost, with significant ramifications for business and employee livelihoods.

On the brighter side, we know firsthand as farmers that the ripple effect current state funding has on markets we attend. These markets are better positioned to manage weather extremes with equipment, staffing and infrastructure support for vendors and shoppers. These markets bring steady growth in SNAP sales to our booth. We witness that markets continue to build a framework to manage SNAP redemptions, outreach to new SNAP customers, and leverage matching public and private funds to enable low-income shoppers to buy more fresh produce at farmers markets. This would not be possible without the support of legislators in Salem.

Just as meaningfully, OFMA and FMF can parlay 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,
Anna Curtin
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