

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

My name is Rue Oseas, and I am a Hillsdale Farmers' Market community member 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.

These programs impact me personally because:

I first got involved in the farmers market when my husband had a back injury and was unable to work our income became so low we needed to enroll in SNAP to continue getting food on the table. I saw the information about the Double Up program and was really excited when I got to tell my husband we could go to the farmers market. The farmers market was often out of our budget previously, but the ability to double our SNAP dollars at the market allowed us to access local produce. It became our weekly outing to go to the market and see what was new, planning our meals for the week as we went.

Hillsdale is staffed by amazing volunteers and fantastic farmers. They work so hard to bring these programs to life and they help build such a good community.

Going forward, farmers markets will be even more important as we need to focus on local food sources as our supply chain has become less reliable and our overarching governmental systems are becoming unstable.

Keeping money local and in the hands of those working so hard to keep our community fed and our environment sustainable is so important and so valuable to me.

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,

Rue Oseas

Hillsdale Farmers Market

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