

Submitter: Heather Loechle

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Human Services

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB5526

My name is Heather Loechle and I have been a passionate supporter of farmers markets for 20 years. My commitment started when I read books and watched documentaries about environmental and social injustices and almost without exception, "shop at your local farmers market" was listed under the "what can I do to help" section. In addition to being a loyal customer, I've volunteered at small farms, harvesting vegetables, and selling produce and eggs at the Portland State University market. I've also served as president of the Oregon City Farmers Market, helping navigate the challenges of maintaining a market during the COVID pandemic. Through this experience, I've come to realize that Double Up Food Bucks is essential to making Farmers Markets accessible to not just the privileged, but to everyone. Because small, local farms are more likely to use environmental and labor practices that are more sustainable, the price of their products must reflect these costs. This makes it hard to compete on price with grocery stores whose products often externalize these costs such as biodiversity loss, soil and water degradation, and human health, leaving society to pay for them down the road. Double Up Food Bucks provide an opportunity for everyone who wants to support sustainable agricultural practices to be able to do so, by removing a barrier (affordability). I am very much in favor of helping to preserve this critical program.