

Submitter: Debby Garman
On Behalf Of: Funding the Double Up Food Bucks Program
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Human Services
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB5526

Co-Chair Lieber, Co-Chair Sanchez, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to urgently request your support for the Double Up Food Bucks program within the Department of Human Services agency budget (SB 5526).

I'm Debby Garman, a member of the Board of Directors of the Hillsboro Farmers Markets. Our Markets have served our surrounding community for more than 40 years and we have stepped up to the increasing need for Double up Food Bucks since the hardships of recession, Covid, and inflation have impacted our vendors and neighbors. We are very grateful partners in this deeply meaningful community program.

The Self Sufficiency portion of SB5526 supports continuation of Double Up Food Bucks Oregon, which matches SNAP dollars spent at farmers markets with an equal amount for Oregon-grown fruits and vegetables. This program exemplifies the type of innovative solution we need to address food insecurity while supporting local agriculture.

Our organization has seen how Double Up Food Bucks has become a cornerstone of our markets' success in serving diverse communities. Our markets are expanding - from our historic Downtown location to Orenco Station, and now our newest market at Hillsboro's huge new development in South Hillsboro at Reed's Crossing. At each location, we see the profound impact of this program. We witness at each of our markets how this matching program transforms these dollars into twice the purchasing power for fresh, local produce.

What makes this program particularly compelling from my board perspective is its alignment with our strategic goals. We're actively working to expand our food vendor variety this quarter, and Double Up Food Bucks helps create the customer base that makes this expansion viable. Our vendors, particularly the 40% who are farmers, report that the predictable income from SNAP and Double Up transactions allows them to better plan their crop production and market participation.

The 2023 state funding was transformative for our markets. It allowed us to offer consistent SNAP matching across all market days and locations, creating reliability that benefited both our customers and vendors. This consistency is crucial as we work to expand our market presence and serve more communities throughout Washington County.

In an era of rising food costs, this program has become more vital than ever. It's not just about food assistance - it's about building a resilient local food system that serves everyone in our community. When SNAP customers can double their purchasing power at our markets, they become regular customers who support local farmers, contribute to our local economy, and help create the vibrant market atmosphere that draws thousands of visitors each market day.

I ask you to fully fund the Double Up Food Bucks program within the Department of Human Services agency budget (SB 5526) before the Oregon Legislature adjourns. This investment will strengthen food security while supporting the local agricultural economy that is vital to Oregon's future.

Thank you for your consideration and for your service.

Debby Garman