

4/27/2023

State and Local Government Committee
75 Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Chairs and members of the conference committee,

We are writing today to express our appreciation for your investment in the Healthy Eating Here at Home program, otherwise known as Market Bucks.

As our neighbors continue to struggle with food insecurity and the high cost of food, Market Bucks is helping low-income Minnesotans stretch their buying power at farmers markets. SNAP customers swipe their EBT card and spend up to \$10 on their card and get a \$2-for-\$1 Market Bucks match.

This program has been successfully operating for over a decade and has proven to be a triple win for Minnesotans:

- Customers win by being able to stretch their buying power at farmers markets, making fresh, local food more affordable for low-income residents.
- Farmers win by bringing in new customers. This past year 5,850 unique customers completed 34,844 SNAP transactions and purchased food from farmers and mobile markets.
- Communities win with increased local economic activity, a stronger sense of community, and healthier people. Thanks to the state investment and the new federal match from USDA, the Market Bucks program has an economic impact of \$1.5 million dollars.

Market Bucks is growing in popularity. The number of Market Bucks spent by customers has more than doubled since 2019 and the number of farmers markets participating has grown to over 105 markets statewide.

To keep pace with demand and offer stability for those participating, **we respectfully request the committee fully fund Market Bucks at a minimum of \$500,000 per year permanently.**

Please contact Leah Gardner lgardner@hungersolutions.org or 651-789-9850 with any questions.

Sincerely,

Advocates for Better Health
Aitkin Farmers' Market Hub
Alexandria Farmers Market
Appetite For Change
Audubon Farmers Market
Aunt Kathy's Kitchen
Backus Farmers Market LLC

"No one should have to worry about when their next meal will be. Market Bucks help close that gap just a little."

– Maple Grove Farmers Market

Bancroft Neighborhood Association
Behind the Breadbox LLC
Bemidji's Natural Choice Farmers Market
Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota
Boors Garden Patch
Boverhof Produce
Bright Haven Farm
Cakejam
California Street Farm
Cambridge Farmers Market
Campus Kitchen at Augsburg University
Canby Farmers Market
Cannon River Fiber Farm
Cannon Valley Farmers' Market
Carlton County Farmers' Market
Cedar Crate Farm
Channel One Regional Food Bank
City of Richfield
Community Action Duluth
Community Emergency Service, Inc.
Dobbins Creek Farm
Dodge County Concerned Citizens
Duluth Farmers Market
Eyota Farmers Market
Farmers Market Place
Fergus Falls Farmers Market
Foundation for Essential Needs (FFEN)
Goodhue County Resource Center
Goodview Farmers Market
Grand Rapids Farmers Market
Great River Vineyard
Greater Twin Cities United Way
Green Machine Farm
Hibbing Farmers Market
Hunger Solutions Minnesota
Hutchinson Farmers Market
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
Jewish Family and Children's Service of Minneapolis
Keystone Community Services
Kinney Mini Farms
L&R Poultry & Produce, LLC
Lake City Food Shelf

"Market bucks provides access to healthy produce for basic wage-earning people who are in critical need of affordable, healthy food."

– PRISM

"Market bucks allow so many folks to have access to healthy fresh food. Working with the farmers market, I get to experience the relief community members have when they realize their limited SNAP money is tripled to buy fresh produce and other local foods from the market. Not only does this help our neighbors struggling to find affordable food, but it also helps our growers who gain the support to continue providing food for the community."

– Saint Paul Farmers Market

"It provides easier access to healthy fresh food for people in need of nourishment."

– Virginia Farmers Market Hub

"Our farmers markets serve food deserts in Duluth; without market bucks, many of our market regulars would not be able to access the beautiful produce our region produces."

– Community Action Duluth

Lake City Market by the Lake
 Lakes Area Farmers Market
 Land Stewardship Project
 Lee Farm
 Legal Services Advocacy Project
 Lor Produce
 Luverne Farmers Market
 Maple Grove Farmers Market
 Mill City Farmers Market
 Minnesota Farmers' Market Association
 Monticello Farmers Market
 Neighborhood House
 Neighborhood Roots
 Northeast Minneapolis Farmers Market
 Northwoods Food Project
 Open Arms of Minnesota
 OWC Markets
 Park Rapids Farmers' Market
 PRISM
 Red Wing Farmers Market
 Red Wing Food Shelf
 Renewing the Countryside
 Riverwalk Market Fair
 Rochester Farmers Market
 Roots Return Heritage Farm LLC

Rotational Roots
 Rusty Patch Farm
 SACA Food Shelf
 Saint Paul Farmers' Market
 Second Harvest Heartland
 Sovereign Starts Seedling Company
 Sprout MN
 St. Luke's Farmers' Market
 The Food Group
 The Good Acre
 The Little Market That Could
 The Stone Arch Eatery LLC
 The Village Agricultural Cooperative
 Tiny Diner Farmers' Market
 U of MN SNAP-Ed Health and Wellness,
 Wadena County
 Valley Outreach
 Virginia Farmers Market Hub
 W.T. Farms
 Wabasha Farmers Market Hub
 Wadena Area Growers Association
 Wadena Farmers Market
 West Side Farmers Market
 White Earth Community Farmers Market
 Winona Farmers Market
 Workforce Development, Inc.

“Market Bucks are a win-win for low-income customers and small farmers and Cottage Foods Producers. We have a number of veterans who supplement their retirement incomes with sales at the farmers' market. Also, young farmer entrepreneurs are able to provide food to a wider income level through Market Bucks. It's an incredibly efficient program, since it supplements a customer's SNAP transaction.”

– Carlton County Farmers Market

“At our farmers market we have seen an exponential increase in the usage and demand of customers using their snap benefits. This market buck match is incredibly important for those using SNAP to access fresh, local, healthy foods. Many of our customers say the additional match makes such a huge financial difference and gives them more choice and autonomy in their decision-making around food.”

– Mill City Farmer Market