



MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture and Rural Development

FROM: Monique Stanton, President and CEO

DATE: March 24, 2022

SUBJECT: Appropriations for Double Up Food Bucks in the FY 2023 MDARD Budget

I am pleased to share with you the Michigan League for Public Policy's support for continued funding of the Double Up Food Bucks (DUFb) program within the 2023 Agriculture and Rural Development budget. As Michigan continues to experience the impacts of an unpredictable and unprecedented public health crisis, we urge lawmakers to put Michigan's people first and target investments to the people and communities most affected by the pandemic and its health, educational and economic impacts, especially our communities of color and families living with low incomes. The League believes that meaningful investment in programs like DUFb that improve the health and well-being of Michiganders is critical to recovering from this pandemic and achieving prosperity in our state.

Double Up Food Bucks is an effective public-private partnership that allows families using the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to double up to \$20 per day in benefits spent on Michigan-grown fruits and vegetables at participating grocery stores and farmers markets. Maintaining state funding for DUFb at the current level of \$2 million would enable program sponsor the Fair Food Network to fully meet its match requirement for a federal grant that will ultimately bring a total of \$12.5 million to Michigan through 2023.

The program magnifies the impact of SNAP in a triple win for Michigan growers and grocers, families, and the economy. Since its inception in 2010, DUFb has provided Michigan households with access to 18 million pounds of food produced by 1,000 Michigan farmers and sold at more than 240 grocery stores and farmers markets. The program has pumped \$24 million into the economy, supporting job creation and vibrant communities.

Double Up Food Bucks has been crucial as the pandemic has plunged so many families into economic hardship and food prices have skyrocketed. Grocery prices have risen three times as quickly during the COVID-19 pandemic as they did in the decade leading up to it. These pressures are putting the greatest squeeze on the budgets of families with low incomes, which disproportionately include children, older adults and people with disabilities.

Additionally, racial and geographic disparities in hunger have persisted throughout the pandemic: households of color continue to experience food insecurity significantly more than white households, and rural counties in northern Michigan have long experienced the highest food insecurity rates in the state—especially among children.

Food insecurity results in [avoidable healthcare costs of \\$182 per Michigander—a total of \\$1.8 billion—every year](#). The impact is especially harmful to children, who need nutrients from healthy food for growth, development and focus. In a state like Michigan, where [half of K-12 students receive free or reduced-price lunch, 44% of kids under 5 receive WIC, and more than one in five children lives in a family that uses SNAP](#), incentives like DUFB are an important tool to promote health, school attendance and academic achievement.

During a downturn, every redeemed SNAP dollar generates an estimated \$1.50 in economic activity, making it an important driver of the state's recovery. Double Up Food Bucks leverages the existing SNAP infrastructure to enhance its impact just when our economy needs it most. Moreover, DUFB participating retailers are mostly independent grocers and farmers markets serving both rural and urban communities often neglected by national chains, promoting recovery that is both spatially and racially equitable.

Most importantly, we know that incentive programs like DUFB work: studies have shown that shoppers using these enhanced food assistance benefits spend more on fruits and vegetables, both in terms of the dollar amount and as a share of total grocery spending; and purchase a greater variety of produce, ensuring consumption of the full spectrum of nutrients people need to thrive. The increased household resources provided through DUFB empower shoppers to make healthy choices that fit their budget and meet their families' specific preferences and medical and cultural needs.

We believe that DUFB has clearly proven its value over more than a decade and is worthy of continuing state support of \$2 million annually. This small investment will bring more federal and philanthropic dollars to Michigan, have a ripple effect on our economy, and most importantly, ensure all residents have the nutrition they need to live healthy, prosperous lives.

Thank you for your consideration in addressing the pressing needs and advancing policies to help Michigan families recover from the pandemic and look forward to a bright future.