



PARTNER ORGANIZATION LETTER OF SUPPORT

February 23, 2023

To whom it may concern,

It is no surprise that these past few years have created tremendous hardships for our cities and communities. From the lingering effects of COVID-19 to the record-breaking inflation and food costs, and now with the end of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Emergency Allotments, millions of New Yorkers are at risk of being food insecure. As such, it is imperative that we begin to mitigate the health outcomes and disparities associated with it. **The Food Policy Council of Buffalo & Erie County respectfully urges you to allocate \$4 million in funding in the 2023-2024 NYS budget to further grow the Double Up Food Bucks (Double Up) program across the state.** Supporting the Double Up program has been identified as a priority for Buffalo and Erie County residents in our Food Action Plan.

Double Up, a Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) incentive program, doubles the value of SNAP benefits spent at participating farmers markets, mobile markets, farm stands, small retailers, and grocery stores up to \$20 per day. Double Up allows SNAP participants to access more fruits and vegetables, ensuring that families have greater access to affordable, healthier foods. At the same time, farmers get more business and local economies get a boost from this additional influx of spending, making them stronger. **The program is a win-win-win, supporting families, farmers, and local economies.**

An appropriation by the state would provide the resources necessary for retailers in our communities to participate in Double Up. More importantly, it also means providing SNAP shoppers greater access to fresh fruits and vegetables they can afford. Research shows that 96% of families eat more produce with Double Up, 94% of Double Up shoppers say they are more confident in their ability to prepare fresh fruits & veggies since using the program, and 92% of Double Up shoppers report the amount of fresh fruits and vegetables they buy has increased as a result of program participation. This can be attributed to Double Up's ability to alleviate access issues resulting from food deserts, lack of transportation, and lack of income.

Reducing diet-related diseases like obesity and diabetes means lower healthcare costs, which in turn, means residents have more money to spend locally. By bringing Double Up to corner stores and markets in communities that need fresh food the most, we're investing in these communities. The more money that's invested into the local economy and invested into the health of our citizens, the greater the return is for the state of New York.

Please join us in supporting the Double Up Food Bucks program and committing to helping families, farmers, and local economies across our great state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Antonina Simeti".

Antonina Simeti
Chair, Food Policy Council of Buffalo & Erie County

Our mission is to advocate for an equitable and sustainable food system for the people of Buffalo and Erie County.