



Council Co-Chairs

Representative Stephen G. Handy

Senator Gene Davis

News Release

Contact:

Jack Wilbur 801-538-7098

(M) 801-243-2801

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Utah Legislature Approves LFAC Request for Expansion of Utah Produce Incentives to Benefit Farmers and Low Income Residents Statewide

Efforts to improve access to fresh, local food by low-income Utah residents took a major step forward in March when the Utah Legislature appropriated \$400,000 to fund the expansion of the Utah Produce Incentives Program.

The appropriation marks the first legislative win for the Local Food Advisory Council (LFAC), created by the Utah Legislature in 2017 to assess ways to strengthen local food systems, improve local food access and keep local farms viable.

"We are very pleased the Utah Produce Incentives request was included in the final Legislative budget," said Rep. Steve Handy (R-Layton), co-chair LFAC. "We hope it is just the beginning of the impact the Local Food Advisory Council can have on local food systems in Utah."

The funding will go to the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) to support the Double-Up Food Bucks program and other Utah produce incentives coordinated by the department.

Double-Up Food Bucks is an innovative produce incentive program that makes fresh, Utah-grown fruits and vegetables more accessible to low-income residents who receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps). The program works by matching SNAP benefits at participating farmers markets and farm stands. The matched benefits can be used to purchase Utah-grown fruits and vegetables.

"Utah produce incentive programs, like Double Up Food Bucks, stretch the food budgets of low-income families while injecting Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) dollars into the Utah food and farming economy," said Brian Emerson, Utahns Against Hunger (UAH).

Double-Up Food Bucks started in Utah in 2015. Utahns Against Hunger worked with a number of partners to launch Utah's Double-Up Food Bucks program at 17 farmers markets across the state. By 2017, the program had expanded to 25 markets, operating in 27 locations in 11 counties.

UAH managed the program the first three years. In 2018 the UDOH and Urban Food Connections of Utah took over management of the program on behalf of the Utah Produce incentives Collaborative.

The program was funded by a combination of a federal grant and private sources through 2017. Due to funding constraints the 2018 season was shortened by two months. Increased private contributions have already ensured funding for the full season in 2019. The State appropriation will help establish a strong financial foundation for the program moving forward.

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