

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

CHAIRWOMAN

Subcommittee on Energy and Water
Development and Related Agencies

Subcommittee on Defense

Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science, and Related Agencies



MARCY KAPTUR

9TH DISTRICT, OHIO
August 3, 2021

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The Honorable Dorothy Pelanda
Director
Ohio Department of Agriculture
8995 E Main Street
Reynoldsburg, OH 43068

Director Pelanda,

Thank you for your exemplary leadership in ensuring food security for Ohioans during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We understand that the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) was given one time funding of \$760,000 for the Specialty Crop Block Grant program through the American Rescue Plan federal stimulus funding. We also know there are many worthy uses for this funding. However, it provides an excellent opportunity to assist both our vulnerable constituents and local farmers at a time when both require assistance as the pandemic and the Delta Variant persist.

On behalf of my constituents in Ohio's 9th Congressional District, I respectfully urge ODA use part of the stimulus funding to increase the benefits of the Seniors Farmers Market Nutrition Program. This program utilizes the symbiotic relationship between local farmers and their senior community to encourage and improve health outcomes among vulnerable seniors. Last year, due to COVID-19, some of Ohio's farmers' markets, such as the Vermilion Farmers Market in my district, were unable to open and allow our local farmers to supply to senior beneficiaries. Nationally, last year's farmers' markets sales were down 70% from the year prior (2019). This funding affords the opportunity to help those farmers attempt to recoup some of their lost income.

The SCBG funding also allows Ohio's worthy seniors a chance to reconnect with their community through their farmers' markets and obtain nutritious and fresh foods their diet may be lacking. The SFMNP funding has not been increased since 2008. However, health afflictions of seniors such as heart disease and diabetes, diseases that can be prevented and even reversed by proper diet, continue to rise and be leading causes of death in the United States. The American Diabetes Association estimated a 41% percent increase in costs of diagnosed diabetes from 2007 (\$174 billion)-2012 (\$245 billion), most of these costs (62.4%) coming from Medicare and Medicaid. The backlog of requests for the SFMNP and the call for more nutritious food for seniors is considerable and growing. It is paramount that ODA allows for an increase of the program through the federal stimulus funding.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. I appreciate all you have done during this most harrowing time to support all Buckeyes and commend you on leading a terrific Victory Garden campaign two years running!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Marcy Kaptur".

Marcy Kaptur
Member of Congress



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Bill Harris
Chairman

Billie Johnson
President /CEO

July 27, 2021

The Honorable Dorothy Pelanda, Director
Ohio Department of Agriculture
8995 E Main Street
Reynoldsburg, OH 43068

Director Pelanda,

Thank you for your leadership and work in ensuring food security for Ohio during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We understand that the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) was given one time funding of \$760,000 through federal stimulus funding. We recognize there are many worthy uses for this funding. However, it provides an excellent opportunity to assist both our vulnerable constituents and local farmers at a time when both require assistance as the pandemic lingers.

The Area Office on Aging of Northwestern Ohio requests the Ohio Department of Agriculture use **up to 50%** of funding to pilot several Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) initiatives:

1. Extend the SFMNP in one county, Lucas, through the winter and spring until the coupons distributed during the growing season are received. Should this demonstration be successful, it will serve as a seed to permanently grow the program.
2. Continue the increase Emergency Relief benefit level for SNAP via Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program benefit. This 15% increase is set to expire in September, and we could use the SFMNP coupons to lessen the detrimental effect of the reduction. Besides providing nutritious food for low income older adults, it will help farmers improve sales of produce at the markets.
3. One-time infrastructure improvement/modernization of the SFMNP. Currently paper coupons, in the amount of \$5, are mailed to applicants. By changing to a debit card system, participants and growers would have more flexibility in buying and selling produce.

The Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program utilizes the symbiotic relationship between local farmers and their senior community to encourage and improve health outcomes among vulnerable seniors. Last year, as COVID-19 raged on, some of Ohio's farmers' markets were unable to open and allow our local farmers to supply to senior beneficiaries. Nationally, last year's farmers' markets sales were down 70% from the year prior (2019). This funding affords the opportunity to help those farmers attempt to recoup some of their lost income.

This funding also allows Ohio's worthy seniors a chance to reconnect with their community through their farmers' markets and obtain nutritious and fresh foods their diet may be lacking. The SFMNP funding has not been increased

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Funded in part by: Ohio Department of Aging, Senior Services levy, United Way, Donations, other State and Federal programs.*



since 2008. However, health afflictions of seniors such as heart disease and diabetes, diseases that can be prevented and even reversed by proper diet, continue to rise and be leading causes of death in the United States. The American Diabetes Association estimated a 41% percent increase in costs of diagnosed diabetes from 2007 (\$174 billion)-2012 (\$245 billion), most of these costs (62.4%) coming from Medicare and Medicaid. The backlog of requests for the SFMNP and the call for more nutritious food for seniors is growing. It is paramount that ODA allows for an increase of the program through the federal stimulus funding.

Thank you for any consideration you may give to this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rebecca Liebes, PhD, RDN".

Rebecca Liebes, PhD, RDN
VP-Nutrition, Health and Wellness

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Billie Johnson".

Billie Johnson
President/CEO

C: The Honorable Congresswoman Kaptur, OH District 9
The Honorable Ursel McElroy, Director, ODA



August 11, 2021

Dorothy Pelanda, Director
Ohio Department of Agriculture
8995 East Main Street
Reynoldsburg, OH 43068

RE: *Federal Stimulus Funding: Mobilization Armor for Ohio's Food Insecurity*

Dear Director Pelanda:

In cognition of the Ohio Department of Agriculture's one time \$760,000 federal stimulus funding award, this Agency (Western Reserve Area Agency on Aging; "WRAAA") realizes the broad scope for numerous and worthy applications to put the conferred monies to optimum use. We, at WRAAA, readily see unexpected value and opportunity to assist both our vulnerable, older participants and comparable, community farmers to deliver serendipitous relief from this protracted pandemic – as both the elderly and the farmers are in dire need of "helping hands".

The WRAAA serves Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain and Medina Counties, and humbly requests the Ohio Department of Agriculture use the funding to expand and modernize the Seniors Farmers' Market Nutrition Program, primarily through:

- Increasing WRAAA's current Senior Farmers' Market Program allocation from 4,080 to 4,585 coupon sets to eliminate our waiting list and to expand the program. The funding request for an additional 500 coupon sets (at \$50.00 a set) totals at \$25,000.
- Modernizing SFMNP from paper coupons to a debit card system for all eligible older adults. Currently, we use paper coupons in the amount of ten \$5 increments for a total of \$50 for eligible; changing to a debit card system, the participants and growers would have more flexibility in buying and selling produce.

The Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program appreciates the symbiotic relationship shared between the farmers and older adults that purposefully improves respective health outcomes. As COVID-19 raged last year, some of Ohio's farmers' markets were unable to open, sustaining a huge loss to local farmers as well as older beneficiaries. And, nationally, farmers' markets sales for 2020 were down 70% from the prior year of 2019. This generous and most appreciated funding would certainly benefit the farmers in their attempt to recoup the majority of lost income.



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Additionally, the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program reconnects Ohio's older adults with their communities via farmers' markets while simultaneously purchasing nutritious and freshly-grown foods presently lacking in their daily diets. SFMNP funding, supported in part by the United States Department of Agriculture, has not been increased since 2008, but chronic health afflictions of older adults, e.g., heart disease, diabetes – any and all diseases that can be prevented, even reversed, through proper diet consumption, which continue to rise in the United States and are leading causes of death. The American Diabetes Association estimated a 41% percent increase in costs of diagnosed diabetes from 2007 (\$174 billion) to 2012 (\$245 billion); most of these costs (62.4%) coming from Medicare and Medicaid. The backlog of requests for the SFMNP and the call for more nutritious food for older adults is expanding exponentially, and it's paramount the Ohio Department of Agriculture understands and is wholly aware of the need for an increase of the SFMNP through the federal stimulus funding.

Allow me to express the WRAAA's and my gratitude for your department's outstanding leadership, labor and work successes during this relentless pandemic that has warranted food security for Ohio.

Thank you in advance for your time and kind consideration of this request. Should you have any questions or need any additional information, please contact me at dbeach@areaagingsolutions.org or at 216.727.2621. It would be my distinct pleasure to field any and all inquiries regarding this entreaty.

Sincerely,

E. Douglas Beach, Ph.D.
Chief Executive Officer
Western Reserve Area Agency on Aging

C: The Honorable Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur, Ohio District 9
Ursel McElroy, Director, Ohio Department of Aging