



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

June 14, 2021

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**“MARKET BUCKS”, A PROGRAM THAT MAKES FARMERS MARKETS MORE ACCESSIBLE TO LOW-INCOME MINNESOTANS, CUT FROM STATE AG BUDGET**

ST PAUL, MINN. – “Market Bucks”, a program that makes healthy, local foods more accessible to lower-income families participating in SNAP-EBT has been eliminated in the state agriculture committee budget agreement. The Market Bucks program matches SNAP-EBT spending dollar-for-dollar (up to \$10 a visit) at 99 farmers markets throughout the state. The elimination of the program in the agriculture budget will cause funding for the program to run out on June 30, 2021.

“Farmers markets around the state have begun their season, and SNAP-EBT customers have already been using this vital program,” says Colleen Moriarty, Executive Director at Hunger Solutions Minnesota, “Losing this added benefit during unprecedented economic insecurity is just devastating.” With 1 in 9 Minnesotans struggling to put food on their tables, programs like Market Bucks help those most vulnerable stretch their limited grocery budgets. The number of Market Bucks redeemed at farmers markets grew 31% from 2019 to 2020, proving its importance to struggling families. “We will continue to see the economic effects of the pandemic on families for months to come. Those affected financially from the pandemic need continued support” says Moriarty.

In 2020, SNAP customers spent over \$275,000 in SNAP-EBT at their local farmers markets, making the program a triple “win” for the state. Not only does the program help low-income Minnesotans, but it also generates over \$600,000 in local economic activity to the state and brings roughly 13,000 new customers to farmers’ markets each year putting extra income right into the pockets of Minnesota’s farmers.

“As of July 1, we will somehow have to cover outstanding Markets Bucks already disbursed, to make both the markets and the vendors whole. We do not look forward to seeing the disappointment and hurt on the faces of our farmers’ market managers and vendors as we inform them that the Agriculture Leadership in Minnesota does not value Market Bucks...” says Kathy Zeman, Executive Director of the Minnesota Farmers’ Market Association.

Hunger Solutions Minnesota, along with 100 farmers markets, hunger-relief organizations, and Minnesota-based companies, are urging the state legislature to explore any and all options to preserve the program, or Hunger Solutions Minnesota will have to look to private philanthropy for funding to continue the program throughout the summer.



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**About Hunger Solutions Minnesota**

Hunger Solutions Minnesota works to end hunger in our state. We take action to assure food security for all Minnesotans by supporting programs and agencies that provide food to those in need, advancing sound public policy, building grassroots advocacy, and informing and educating critical stakeholders about the status of hunger in Minnesota.

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