



**Interested Party Written Testimony — House HHS Subcommittee
HB 110 — State Operating Budget
March 4, 2021**

Chair Roemer, Vice Chair Lipps, and Ranking Member West — Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on House Bill 110, the State Operating Budget, **in support of Produce Perks Midwest’s funding request which would appropriate \$500,000 in each fiscal year within the Department of Job and Family Service’s TANF Block Grant for Produce Perks to expand services to reach more SNAP recipients across the state.**

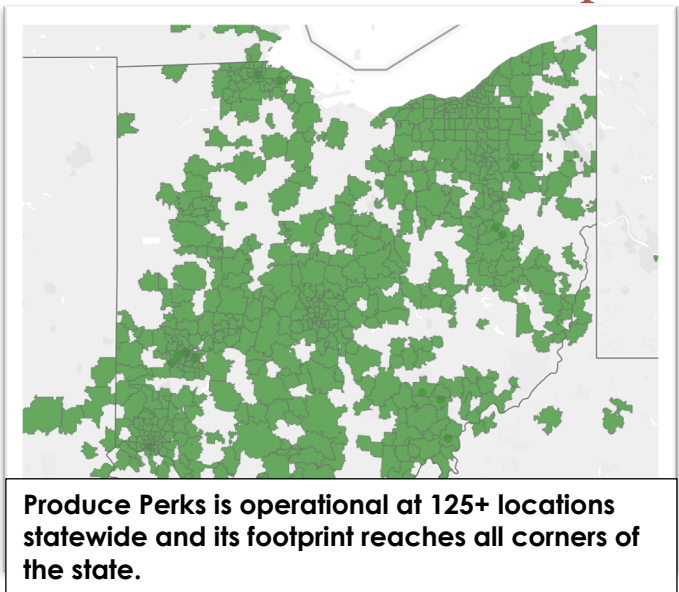
My name is Tevis Foreman and I serve as the Executive Director of Produce Perks Midwest, the lead agency administering Produce Perks, Ohio’s Nutrition Incentive Program.

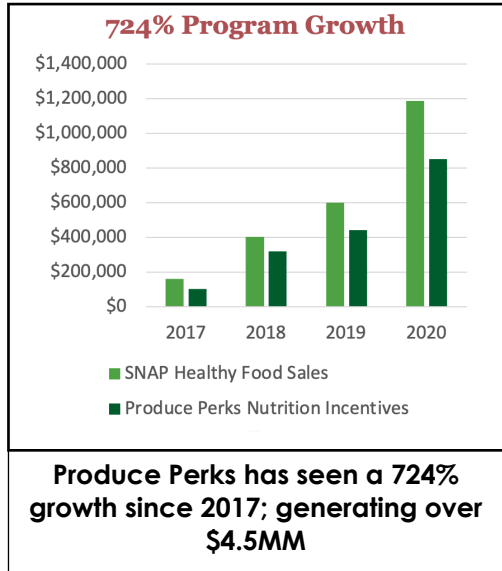
Produce Perks, Ohio’s nutrition incentive program, doubles the purchasing power of SNAP and P-EBT consumers by providing a \$1-for-\$1 match to buy fresh, local produce from Ohio farmers, farmers’ markets and grocery-retailers across the state — our work increases affordable access to healthy foods for over 2 million struggling Ohioans.

The FY20-21 State Operating Budget appropriated \$250,000 per fiscal year to expand Produce Perks services to increase healthy food purchases within TANF eligible households from Ohio farmers and grocery-retailers. As a result, Produce Perks generated over \$2.2 million in healthy food purchases by SNAP, P-EBT and TANF households in 2020. These dollars are going directly back into our communities — stimulating local economies, supporting Ohio farmers and small-business retailers, strengthening localized food systems and empowering low-income consumers to buy healthy food for their families.

In response to COVID-19, Produce Perks invested over \$75,000 into local infrastructure to help keep farmers markets and small-scale retailers operational during the pandemic: including working with select Ohio-owned grocers to support online SNAP purchasing, PPE supplies, innovations in ecommerce, online ordering and home delivery for SNAP, P-EBT and TANF households.

SNAP Customer & Farmer Impact





A thriving agriculture sector and healthy Ohioans are critical to our state’s overall prosperity — Produce Perks simultaneously works toward both ends. **Since 2017, Produce Perks has experienced 724% growth, generating over \$4.5 million in healthy food purchases by Ohio SNAP/P-EBT shoppers.** The USDA estimates that for every SNAP \$1 spent within local economies, there is a \$1.80 economic impact. Per USDA estimates, **Produce Perks has generated \$8.1 million in economic activity focused on healthy food purchases from Ohio farmers and small-market retailers.** Produce Perks is an evidence-based program model supported by the USDA and recommended as a key strategy to address food insecurity and improve health outcomes by the Ohio 2020-22 State Health Improvement Plan.

We know the need for state funding is great for so many organizations. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a widespread public health and economic crisis, exasperating systemic inequities and exponentially increasing the number of Ohioans experiencing food insecurity. **Our response, Produce Perks, strengthens local food infrastructure, stimulates local economies and improves health – all while providing the dignity of choice for struggling families.** While SNAP continues to be an important first line of defense against food insecurity for millions of people, it still fails to meet a household’s basic need. Ohio has the 6th highest number of households receiving SNAP benefits.¹ The projected food insecurity rate for Ohioans is 18.1%, a nearly 5% increase from 2018, making Ohio the 10th most food insecure state in the nation.² Additionally, one in four (25%) children in Ohio are living in a food insecure household³. **As a great agricultural state, we can do better.**

I implore you to support our amendment of \$500,000 in each fiscal year within the Department of Job and Family Service’s TANF Block Grant for Produce Perks to expand services to reach more SNAP recipients across the state. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Tevis Foreman
Executive Director
Produce Perks Midwest, Inc.

¹ Policy Matters Ohio: <https://www.policymattersohio.org/research-policy/>

² Feeding America: https://www.feedingamerica.org/sites/default/files/2020-10/Brief_Local%20Impact_10.2020_0.pdf

³ Ohio Association of Foodbanks: <https://ohiofoodbanks.org/coronavirus/>