



ProducePERKS

Interested Party Written Testimony — Senate Health Committee
HB 110 — State Operating Budget
April 28, 2021

Chair Huffman, Vice Chair Antani, and Ranking Member Antonio — 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. The House passed version of the appropriates \$250,000 in each fiscal year to Produce Perks Midwest and we respectfully ask for this increase to expand our work and reach more Ohioans.**

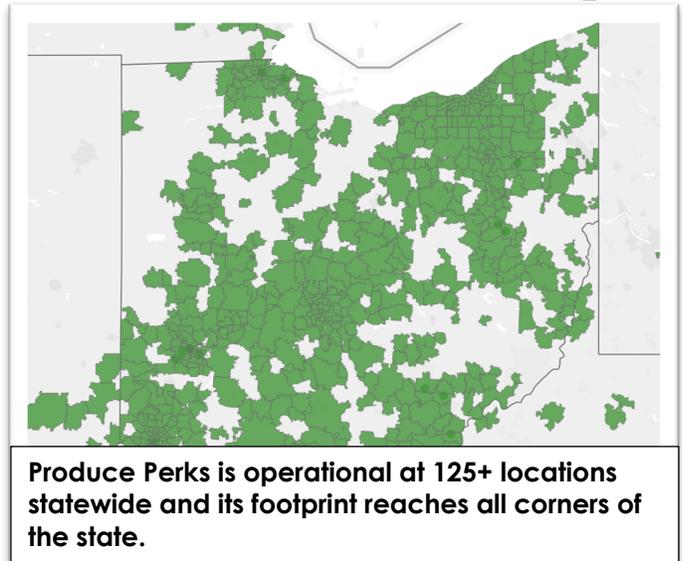
My name is Tevis Foreman and I serve as the Executive Director of Produce Perks Midwest, Ohio’s lead agency administering Produce Perks statewide – *increasing household food security, improving health outcomes and strengthening local economies.*

Produce Perks, Ohio’s Nutrition Incentive Program, doubles the purchasing power of SNAP & P-EBT consumers by providing a \$1-for-\$1 match to buy fruits & vegetables from Ohio farmers, farmers’ markets and grocery-retailers across the state — our work increases affordable access to healthy foods for the over 1.5 million Ohioans receiving SNAP/P-EBT benefits.

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 \$2.9 million in healthy food purchases by SNAP, P-EBT and TANF households in 2020.**

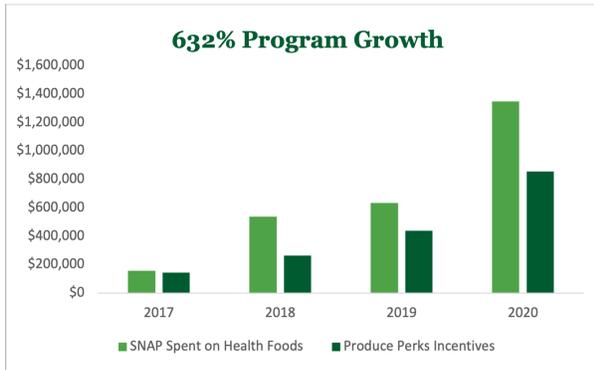
These dollars are going directly back into our communities — stimulating local economies, supporting Ohio farmers and small-business retailers, strengthening localized food systems and empowering low-income consumers to buy healthy food for their families.

SNAP Customer & Farmer Impact



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.

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 632% growth, generating over \$4.2 million in healthy food purchases by Ohio SNAP 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 \$7.3 million in 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.

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.**

Additionally, every dollar appropriated to Produce Perks leverages a federal match through the USDA’s Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) program, doubling the impact for Ohio families, farmers, and retailers. In 2018, the USDA awarded Produce Perks Midwest \$2,276,890 to expand programming, representing a \$4.6 million commitment to Ohio’s food insecure families, farmers, and local economies.

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.

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/>