

The Governor's Office of FOUNDATION LIAISON

A partnership between the
State of Michigan and the
Council of Michigan Foundations

Connecting Government and Philanthropy to Improve the Health of Michigan's Families

Michigan's nonpartisan Office of Foundation Liaison (OFL) was created in 2003 at the suggestion of Michigan philanthropic leaders. The Office — the first of its kind in the nation — works to foster partnerships between state government agencies and philanthropic organizations that are likely to result in policy and programmatic reforms to improve the lives of children and families in Michigan. Since its inception, OFL has brokered more than \$150 million in foundation investments for initiatives to increase Michigan's economic competitiveness through reforms in P-20 education, economic and workforce development, health, and land use.

OFL works in three priority issue areas: prenatal to postsecondary education, workforce development, and health. Within health, OFL has made great strides in connecting government and philanthropy to expand access to healthy, nutritious, and affordable food, especially for Michigan's most vulnerable populations.

From a Fledgling Program to a Nationwide Model: Double Up Food Bucks

Healthy eating is an integral part of fostering a vibrant, sustainable community where families and children can thrive. Yet healthy eating is not easily accessible for all. In fact, low-income families in urban communities often struggle to find healthy, quality food to bring home due to a lack of affordable and available options in their area.

Fair Food Network, an Ann Arbor-based nonprofit, has been working to combat this food accessibility issue in Michigan's most vulnerable urban communities through Double Up Food Bucks, a program that allows Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) beneficiaries to take \$20 of assistance and double it by purchasing Michigan grown fruit and vegetables at local farmer's markets and some grocery stores.

Through education sessions, Dr. Oran B. Hesterman, Fair Food Network's President and CEO, brought Michigan's food access issue to light for OFL and Michigan funders. OFL saw an

opportunity to help Fair Food Network serve a greater number of Michigan's low-income families and supported the program's expansion by connecting Fair Food Network to the Governor's Office and to funders like the Open Society Foundations, which provided the largest grant for program expansion.

In the beginning, Double Up Food Bucks operated only in five Detroit-area farmer's markets. Today, Double Up Food Bucks has expanded to hundreds of markets across the state and has become a nationwide model that is used in over 20 states. The program has allowed low-income Michigan families to bring home more nutritious food while also supporting family farmers and the growth of local economies across Michigan. What's more, Double Up Food Bucks helped inform national policy; the Farm Bill of 2014 included \$100 million in funding over five years to support the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive Grant Program.

According to Dr. Hesterman, OFL was an essential partner in helping Double Up Food Bucks expand across Michigan. Without OFL's facilitation and special position between the philanthropic and governmental sectors, Michigan's low-income families would not have received the expanded access they need to healthy, nutritious food.

OFL's Key Roles in Helping to Expand Double Up Food Bucks

- 1 Gathering important information about food access issues for funder education opportunities
- 2 Connecting public and private partners to help Fair Food Network serve a greater number of Michigan's low-income families
- 3 Facilitating conversations with government and philanthropic partners through OFL's special position between the public and private sectors