

PRESS RELEASE

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PA Makes Historic \$2 million Investment in Food Bucks Program

Legislation passed as part of \$50.1 billion state budget package for the first time includes funding for nutrition incentive program; Will expand SNAP recipients' ability to access and afford fresh fruits and vegetables

Philadelphia, PA – The Food Trust is thrilled to see a \$2 million investment from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to expand Food Bucks, a statewide nutrition incentive program. The appropriation was part of the recently passed \$50.1 million state budget, which arrived several months late following a prolonged impasse in Harrisburg. The funding represents the first time Food Bucks are included in the state budget and comes at a crucial time for tackling food insecurity across the Commonwealth.

“We are extremely grateful to Gov. Shapiro and our legislature for championing smart, sound investments in nutrition programs that directly impact Pennsylvanians who need them most,” said Mark Edwards, President and CEO of The Food Trust. “This investment from the state is an affirmation that these programs work – the Food Bucks program is a proven triple win, supporting individual health, boosting sales for local farmers and businesses, and reducing healthcare costs – and can now be expanded to reach more residents in every corner of the Commonwealth.”

The Food Trust says the increased funding could be deployed to double the number of participating retailers and farmers markets in the Food Bucks program. This expansion also can bring in counties where there are no existing Food Bucks redemption sites – urban and rural communities that continue to see increased need.

WHAT ARE FOOD BUCKS?

Food Bucks is a regional program administered by The Food Trust that is currently active in more than 17 counties and 100 retail sites across Pennsylvania. These include supermarkets, independent grocery stores, corner stores, farmers markets, mobile markets and more. Eligible SNAP recipients are able to swipe their EBT card and receive a token, paper coupon or discount worth up to \$10 additional dollars to spend on fruits and vegetables.

Nutrition incentives like these are designed to make fresh fruits and vegetables more affordable, giving families purchasing power to bring home high-quality food. Further, activations at seasonal and year-round farmers markets foster greater connections between residents and fresh food that is grown locally. Small business owners and local farmers report these incentives increase sales, generate new customers and promote farm expansion and crop diversity.

To learn more about the Food Bucks Program, visit: <https://thefoodtrust.org/what-we-do/food-bucks>

About The Food Trust

Founded in 1992, The Food Trust works with neighborhoods, institutions, retailers, farmers and policymakers across the country to ensure delicious, nutritious food for all. Backed by three decades of research and evaluation, our holistic, community-centered approach to nutrition security weaves together three core programming elements — access, affordability and education — as well as a focus on advocating for public policy solutions. Today, The Food Trust works with partners across the country to develop and implement Healthy Food Financing Programs that offer financing and technical support to grocery stores and other healthy food retail in under-resourced neighborhoods. Learn more at www.thefoodtrust.org.