



MINNESOTA GROCERS ASSOCIATION

1360 Energy Park Drive, Suite #110 • St. Paul, MN 55108 • 651-228-0973 • 1-800-966-8352 • www.mngrocers.com

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Chair Wiklund and Members of the Senate Health and Human Service Committee:

The Minnesota Grocers Association (MGA) thanks you for the opportunity to express our strong support for the proposed Fresh Bucks pilot program funded in SF1858 (Mann) that would creatively help Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) participants stretch their food budgets year-round at more retail locations across Minnesota.

Minnesota has a unique culture of hundreds of hometown grocers and convenience stores, many of whom are independent, multi-generational, and locally owned. The MGA has been representing Minnesota's food industry for over 125 years and today totals over 300-member companies with over 1,300 locations statewide, which includes food producers, manufacturers, brokers, and wholesalers. Our industry provides over 150,000 jobs in the state.

Through the current Market Bucks initiative, SNAP shoppers receive a dollar-for-dollar match on SNAP purchases up to \$10 per visit, plus an additional \$10 match for fresh fruits and vegetables. This program, funded by both state and federal dollars, directly benefits Minnesotans by improving access to healthy foods and boosting local food economies.

However, many SNAP customers still face challenges in affording healthy foods like fresh fruits and vegetables year-round. To address this need, the proposed Fresh Bucks program would expand this dollar-for-dollar match on produce purchases for SNAP customers to be used at grocery stores and other retail settings. This expansion is not only a critical step toward improving access to nutritious food but also a win-win-win for Minnesota:

- **Retailers** will attract more SNAP shoppers and boost sales.
- **Communities** will benefit from stronger local economies and healthier residents.
- **Customers** will have increased buying power for affordable, healthy foods.

The Fresh Bucks expansion is especially important for communities with low food access or high SNAP participation, as it would help ensure that more Minnesotans have access to the fresh produce they need.

The MGA strongly supports SF1858 and appreciates the committee's consideration of this important enhancement to the current Market Bucks program. The piloting of this innovative Fresh Bucks proposal will better serve Minnesota families and strengthen our local food systems.

Sincerely,

Steve Barthel
Director of Government Relations
Minnesota Grocers Association