

Kelli Kelly - Testimony in Support of SB 233

Madam Chair and members of the committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of SB 233 and the Home Feeds Nevada program.

My name is Kelli Kelly. I have worked in the Nevada food system for the last 15 years. I work as a business coach for agriculture and food systems business owners statewide. Basically, I support farmers as they start and grow their businesses, including through the diversification of sales channels. The Home Feeds Nevada program creates an opportunity for our state to purchase food from Nevada farmers for distribution to Nevada's food-insecure families. It is a rare program that has benefits on both sides of the dollar. On the purchasing side, Nevada farmers can diversify sales through a farm-to-food-bank channel. On the distribution side, Nevada's food banks have access to fresh, nutrient-dense produce, animal proteins, and dairy products that are often in short supply and high demand in their pantries.

This sales channel works because the Nevada Department of Agriculture bridges the gap between Nevada farmers, the Food Banks and the clients they serve.

Since the creation and initial funding of Home Feeds Nevada, Nevada farmers have increased the amount of food that they grow because they are confident that, if they don't sell the produce at a higher retail price to individual consumers, they have a guaranteed sales channel to the program. Continued funding of this program also reduces the uncertainty that new farmers have when deciding whether to launch a new business.

Let's be clear, the appropriation in SB 233 is just a financial band-aid to keep this program going in the short term. The Home Feeds Nevada also needs a long-term strategic funding plan to ensure continued implementation in the future. Federal elimination of farm and food security programs including the 2025 Local Food Purchasing Agreement contract have already cost the state over \$3.5 million dollars in federal funding that would have flowed through this program. It is essential that HFN have a sustainable long-term plan to ensure program viability without reliance of USDA dollars.

I encourage you to support Nevada farmers, to support Home Feeds Nevada, and to pass SB 233!