

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

GREG GIANFORTE
GOVERNOR



KRISTEN JURAS
LT. GOVERNOR

May 14, 2021

The Honorable Wylie Galt
Speaker of the House
State Capitol
Helena, MT 59601

The Honorable Mark Blasdel
President of the Senate
State Capitol
Helena, MT 59601

Dear Speaker Galt and President Blasdel:

In accordance with the power vested in me as Governor by the Constitution and the laws of the State of Montana, I hereby veto House Bill 235, "AN ACT GENERALLY REVISING SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM LAWS; CREATING THE NUTRITION INCENTIVES PROGRAM FOR SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS TO BUY ELIGIBLE FRUITS AND VEGETABLES; UPDATING TERMINOLOGY TO MATCH FEDERAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM LANGUAGE; PROVIDING AN APPROPRIATION; PROVIDING RULEMAKING AUTHORITY; AMENDING SECTIONS 39-51-403, 39-51-2208, 39-71-118, 40-4-215, 45-6-312, 50-49-103, 53-2-108, 53-2-201, 53-2-211, 53-2-606, 53-2-901, 53-2-902, 53-2-903, 53-3-115, AND 53-4-717, MCA; REPEALING SECTION 53-2-904, MCA; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE".

HB 235 appropriates \$95,000 to establish a new state-administered nutrition incentive grant program to increase the purchasing power of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) beneficiaries with limited access to fresh fruits and vegetables. Also known as "Double SNAP," this program would provide another means for Montanans to get a 1:1 dollar match for SNAP spending at participating organizations that sell healthy, local food. For example, an individual that spends \$5 on SNAP-eligible foods at a participating farmer's market would receive another \$5 to purchase more fruits and vegetables.

While I support the intent of the sponsor's legislation to promote the purchase of nutritious foods, HB 235 would effectively duplicate existing federal initiatives at the expense of the Montana taxpayer. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), which oversees SNAP, has a well-established nutrition incentive program from which Montana and our SNAP participants already benefit. At my direction, both the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Public Health and Human Services will continue work with our federal partners to ensure that Montana's existing

Speaker Galt
President Blasdel
May 14, 2021
Page 2

Double SNAP program is operating at maximum efficiency and leveraging all existing federal tools and resources.

Furthermore, as we determine how to best allocate federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars, my administration and the legislature have an opportunity to reevaluate our SNAP program and consider reforms, including initiatives that encourage beneficiaries to use SNAP dollars on fresh fruits and vegetables. The federal government has made substantial investments in our nutrition assistance programs over the course of the pandemic, and ARPA appropriated approximately \$11 million to support Montana's SNAP system. USDA also made an additional \$75 million available to nutrition incentive program grantees. I urge beneficiaries to purchase healthier foods, including fresh Montana produce, which they can already do with this funding.

For these reasons, I veto HB 235.

Sincerely,



Greg Gianforte
Governor

cc: Legislative Services Division
Secretary Christi Jacobsen