MICHIGAN FARMERS MARKET ASSOCIATION

2026 Advocacy Priorities

Each year, MIFMA's Advocacy Committee prepares a slate of policy priorities that align with our mission and vision and propose changes at a state and/or national level to equitably advance the viability of community-driven marketplaces for the benefit of everyone in the community.

At the 2026 annual meeting, we will be asking our members to rank the following priorities within both the state and national categories to help direct our limited advocacy capacity towards the policies our members believe will have the greatest impact for their community-driven marketplaces. One representative from each member organization will be asked to select all of the policy areas that your organization is in support of MIFMA working towards. If there are any policy areas your organization does not support, we ask that you do not select those areas.

Please familiarize yourself with the priorities and bring any and all questions and discussion to the annual meeting to inform this voting process.

State Level Priorities

Advancing Produce Prescription Programs (PPR) in Michigan: A growing body of evidence shows the impact PPR programs have on the health of participants and their communities while strengthening the economic viability of local food systems. However, access to PPR programs still remains limited for many Michiganders who would benefit, and expanding PPR program participation among Michigan's 3.2 million Medicaid participants could bring considerable health benefits and healthcare cost savings to the state.

Beginning in 2025, Michigan now allows Medicaid Health Plans to offer In Lieu of Services (ILOS) that include select food and nutrition supports, such as PPR, to support eligible Medicaid beneficiaries' health-related nutrition needs. While limited to only a few months, the initial implementation of ILOS demonstrates that additional capacity and infrastructure resources will be needed for community-based organizations providing PPR to successfully partner with Medicaid Health Plans as locally-based ILOS Providers. MIFMA will continue to join partners in our Michigan Produce Prescription Coalitions to advocate for policy, funding, and infrastructure that will advance long-term sustainability of PPR programs run by community-based organizations and partnering with local food systems through the developing Michigan In Lieu of Services opportunity and beyond.

Advocacy efforts will continue to raise awareness of these programs among state decision makers and prepare them to take action to support these programs when applicable.

Maintaining Farm Direct Access to Food Assistance Programs: Supporting the ability of farmers and community-driven marketplaces to accept food assistance benefits has been a priority for MIFMA for more than two decades, and during that time we've seen changes and impacts both big and small.

Big changes like the transition of WIC Produce Connection and Senior Project Fresh programs from paper vouchers to electronic benefits have had major impacts on farmers and benefit recipients alike, while other trends evolve over time, such as the current landscape of states proposing to make changes to what items SNAP recipients can purchase with their benefits. MIFMA continually monitors both state and national trends, proposed program changes, and potential challenges facing the ability of farm direct retailers to be essential food access points in their communities.

Ongoing advocacy efforts would ensure that all community-driven marketplaces can access the technology and training needed to accept program benefits and that any

changes to these programs does not negatively affect how program participants and retailers interact with these programs.

This priority is purposefully specific in intent but broad in strategy to allow for MIFMA and our Advocacy Committee to have the greatest ability to be responsive to the political climate- defensive when necessary and opportunistic when possible- to advance this work.

Wireless EBT Equipment Funding: A Michigan Enhancement Grant of $350,000 was awarded to MIFMA in 2020 and can be utilized to purchase wireless equipment for farmers and markets through December of 2027 or until funding is fully utilized. Our next best opportunity for securing permanent state funding for wireless devices will be when the State EBT Contract is planned for renewal in 2027.

There are two avenues to request ongoing funding: the first is by having SNAP and WIC EBT funding included in the State EBT Contract, which would allow for continuous operations, while the second path would require additional appropriation requests of the state legislature. Advocacy efforts should start with educating legislators on the need and value of including a provision in the State EBT Contract to ensure access to EBT processing equipment for farmers and markets and drafting boilerplate language for the FY27 budget.

National Level Priorities

Farm Bill: The federal Farm Bill is a major piece of legislation that impacts farmers, farmers markets, research, food assistance programming, and so much more. The last Farm Bill was signed into law in 2018. This bill is traditionally updated every 5 years. To date Congress has not drafted a bill able to pass both chambers of our legislature, and there is currently no active language for the current session of Congress. A strong Farm Bill is needed to provide security for our communities.

In partnership with the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC), we will monitor marker bills and other proposed bill language, join sign-on letters, and participate in additional advocacy efforts to maintain support for a successful Farm Bill that supports our mission to the greatest extent possible.

Produce Prescription Programs (PPR) Funded by Medicaid and Medicare Advantage: Funding for Food as Medicine initiatives, including Produce Prescriptions (PPR), has continued to gain significant bipartisan momentum at the national level. Program funding efforts within the Indian Health Services, the US Department of Agriculture, and partnerships within the US Department of Veterans Affairs continue to build the case for PPR's integration within healthcare.

Momentum for PPR and other Food as Medicine programming has continued from the Biden Administration's 2022 White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health into the Trump Administration's Make America Healthy Again (MAHA) movement. Over recent years, several policy options have emerged, with Medicaid flexibilities seeing the greatest momentum; over 15 states (including Michigan) are currently investigating or implementing Food as Medicine programs under their State Medicaid Plans. However, recent federal cuts to the Medicaid program may jeopardize the momentum seen to date, leaving a need to proactively defend current PPR programming while simultaneously exploring alternative pathways, including Medicare Advantage.

MIFMA will continue to join the National Produce Prescription Collaborative and national partners to advocate for these programs to be a covered benefit for members of all government-sponsored health plans, with prioritization of local food systems and community-based organizations to equitably expand access to healthy foods for everyone in Michigan and beyond.

Protecting Food Assistance Funding and Farm Direct Retailer Access: Supporting the ability of farmers and community-driven marketplaces to accept food assistance benefits has been a priority for MIFMA for more than two decades, and during that time

we've seen changes and impacts both big and small. Big changes like the transition of WIC Produce Connection and Senior Project Fresh programs from paper vouchers to electronic benefits have had major impacts on farmers and benefit recipients alike, while other trends evolve over time, such as the current landscape of states proposing to make changes to what items SNAP recipients can purchase with their benefits.

MIFMA continually monitors both state and national trends, proposed program changes, and potential challenges facing the ability of farm direct retailers to be essential food access points in their communities. Ongoing advocacy efforts would ensure that all community-driven marketplaces can access the technology needed to accept program benefits and that any changes to these programs does not negatively affect how program participants and retailers interact with these programs.

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Interest Areas

The following interest areas are being shared with our members to demonstrate where our Advocacy Committee and staff are seeking to learn more, monitor political attitudes and climates, and prepare for future policy priorities. Our assessment is that these areas are not currently politically feasible and/or ready to be elevated to a policy priority status by MIFMA. Members will not be asked to vote on these interest areas, however we offer the list in full transparency and preparedness for future advocacy efforts. In the descriptions, an N denotes action at the National level could be impactful and an S indicates action at the State level could be impactful.

Nutrition Education Funding (SNAP-Ed) (N/S): MIFMA is looking for ways to respond to the elimination of federal SNAP-Education funding. This critical program reached millions through programming like hands-on classes in schools, food pantries, and community-driven marketplaces to promote healthy eating and the Food Navigator program. The funding loss leaves gaps in support for low-income families and exacerbates food insecurity amid broader SNAP cuts.

Potential paths could include advocating for state-level alternatives in funding, partnering with local farmers and retailers for community workshops, and amplifying the proven benefits of nutrition education on health outcomes and long-term food access.

Office of Urban Ag Funding (N): In the 2018 Farm Bill, the USDA was instructed to create an Office of Urban Agriculture to improve the department's support of urban and innovative farming operations. Advocacy in this area could ensure that the Office is fully funded and is serving the needs of urban producers.

Rural Broadband and Equitable/Affordable Internet Access (N/S): Consistent, reliable, and affordable access to the internet has become essential for so many aspects of our daily lives, including access to employment, education, and resources. This challenge is especially present in rural communities where many of our farmers grow food and where there are specific food access challenges. We continue to investigate policy levers that can be impactful in expanding internet access across Michigan, including our rural communities.

Increase Winery Size Limitations for Selling at Farmers Markets (S): **Beer & Spirit Sales at Michigan Farmers Markets (S)**: In 2012, Michigan passed a law to allow wine sales and sampling at farmers markets, which has greatly added to the atmosphere of many farmers markets and contributed to the viability of numerous small winemakers in our state. In the same way that wine, hard cider, and mead promotes Michigan agriculture, beer and spirits brewed and distilled in Michigan typically prominently

feature Michigan agricultural products and bring a lot of consumer interest to the local food and beverage industry. MIFMA feels that including beer and spirit sales and sampling at Michigan farmers markets could strengthen support for Michigan agriculture and bring more attention to breweries, distillers, and farmers markets alike. We continue to watch for any movement towards legislation that may be introduced to allow for these parameters.

The Michigan Liquor Control Commission currently has a special permit available to allow winemakers that produce 5,000 gallons or less per year to sample and sell wine, hard cider, and mead at Michigan farmers markets. This production limit excludes a large portion of Michigan wineries from participating in farmers markets. Increasing the production limit would allow more winemakers to connect with more Michigan farmers markets, resulting in more vendors at markets, greater consumer connections to this Michigan agricultural product, and more opportunities for local wineries to connect with other local businesses through farmers markets.

Support for a Market Manager Cost Share Program (S): Frequent transitions in market management and leadership are detrimental to a farmers market's sustainability and growth. In Michigan, like other areas of the country, many market managers are notoriously undercompensated for their role. Unplanned or frequent transitions in market management can negatively impact a market's overall performance, and poorly compensated and unpaid positions are difficult to fill. As market managers leave, institutional knowledge is lost and relationships with vendors, shoppers, and the community must be rebuilt. The COVID pandemic has exacerbated the challenges of appropriately compensating market managers.

To address these challenges, MIFMA is creating a Market Manager Cost Share program based on an existing program of the Community Farm Alliance (CFA) of Kentucky to provide direct financial support for market manager compensation and training and technical assistance to help build the capacity of the market to raise matching funds during the program and to fully fund for the position after participation. Parameters of

the program are yet to be determined. Advocacy efforts could request state funding for the cost-share program to support market manager compensation and help farmers markets in our state maintain and expand healthy food access.