



Assemblymember Demond L. Meeks



Summer 2026

Community Newsletter

Keeping Rochester Fed: *How 'Double Up Food Bucks' is Doubling Grocery Budgets*

As grocery prices continue to climb, a vital nutrition program is receiving a major boost to help Rochester families put fresh food on the table.

Assemblymember Demond Meeks recently advocated for and successfully secured continued funding for Double Up Food Bucks New York in the state budget. The state investment comes at a critical time. Local food costs have risen significantly over the past several years, making it increasingly difficult for household budgets to keep pace.

"When grocery prices jump while federal food assistance faces reductions, it moves beyond an economic statistic and becomes a clear crisis for working families," said Assemblymember Meeks. "No resident should have to choose between covering basic utilities and providing fresh, nutritious food for their household."

What is Double Up Food Bucks?

Administered statewide by the nonprofit Field & Fork Network, Double Up Food Bucks is a free program that provides a dollar-for-dollar match on fresh fruit and vegetable purchases for anyone shopping with SNAP benefits (EBT).

If you spend \$10 of your SNAP benefits on fresh produce, you get an additional \$10 to spend on more fresh fruits and vegetables. The program is designed to respect individual dignity, improve health outcomes, and keep the local economy strong by steering dollars directly to New York farmers.

Where to Use It in Rochester

The program has expanded rapidly and is available at several favorite local retailers and markets right here in our community:

- **The Rochester Public Market:** A cornerstone for local shopping.
- **Abundance Food Co-op:** Located at 571 South Avenue.
- **Tops Friendly Markets:** Available at participating locations, including the West Avenue and Upper Falls Boulevard stores.
- **Foodlink Curbside Market:** Bringing affordable, fresh mobile markets straight into our neighborhoods.

How It Works: A Quick Guide

The way you receive and spend your Double Up benefits depends slightly on where you shop:

At Farmers Markets & Mobile Markets (Up to \$50 per day)

1. **Visit the Info Booth:** Before you shop, go to the market manager or information booth.
2. **Slide Your EBT Card:** Tell them how much you want to spend from your SNAP benefits.
3. **Get Your Match:** The market will give you your SNAP tokens plus an equal amount in Double Up Food Bucks tokens or electronic points to spend entirely on fresh produce.

At Major Grocery Stores like Tops (Up to \$20 per day)

1. **Shop for Produce:** Fill your basket with fresh, whole, or minimally processed fruits and vegetables.
2. **Pay with SNAP:** Use your EBT card at checkout.
3. **Earn a Coupon:** The register will automatically print a Double Up coupon matching what you spent on produce. Bring that coupon on your next shopping trip to get your free fruits and vegetables.

What Can You Buy? Double Up Food Bucks can only be used on fresh, raw, whole, or minimally cut fruits, vegetables, herbs, and plant seedlings meant for growing food. It cannot be used on canned, dried, or frozen produce, or items with added sugars, salts, and fats.

A Stronger Local Economy

What began years ago as a small pilot project at seven farmers' markets has blossomed into a statewide success operating across 54 counties. This year, the program is projected to match nearly \$6 million in SNAP purchases across New York.

By utilizing Double Up Food Bucks, Rochester families get twice the nutrition for their budget, while local agricultural dollars stay right here in our regional economy.

Want to find a location near you? To see a full interactive map of participating stores, farm stands, and markets, visit www.DoubleUpNYS.com or call 800-682-5016.



Assemblymember Meeks Helps Secure \$2 Million Capital Investment for the Baden Street Settlement

For decades, the Baden Street Settlement has been a vital beacon of hope, support, and community in Northeast Rochester. This year, Assemblymember Demond Meeks and his colleagues in the Rochester legislative delegation fought hard in Albany to ensure our neighborhood safety nets received the funding they deserve. One of the biggest headlines of this year's budget is a massive \$2 million capital investment, secured directly for the Baden Street Settlement.

"The local organizations on the ground are the true backbone of our neighborhoods," Assemblymember Meeks stated. "This \$2 million investment means updated facilities, safer spaces, and expanded family resources right where they are needed most."

This major funding will allow Baden Street to modernize its infrastructure, ensuring it can continue providing critical childcare, youth programs, and family services to our community for generations to come.



Modernizing Public Safety: *Cracking Down on Ghost Guns and Regulating Frontier AI*

True public safety means striking at the root of violence wherever it hides, whether that is on our local street corners or in the digital arena. This year's state budget takes a bold, dual-track approach to protecting New York families by combining tough new laws with grassroots community intervention.

Stopping the Pipeline of Untraceable Firearms

To combat the rise of illegal firearms, the budget draws a hard line with new Public Protection legislation (Assembly Bill A.10005 C and Senate Bill S.9005 C, Part C). The state has now made it a Class D felony to use a 3D printer to manufacture illegal firearms or rapid-fire modification devices. Furthermore, a strict new standard requires all 3D printers sold in New York State to feature mandatory blocking technology, preventing them from loading illegal gun blueprint codes.

Supporting Our Streets and Youth

To back up these laws, Assemblymember Meeks helped secure over \$36 million statewide for community-led intervention programs like Project GIVE and SNUG street outreach. These funds ensure that local crisis teams can remain active on our pavement, de-escalating conflicts and mentoring our youth.

Launching the First of Its Kind DIGIT Office

Public safety is also moving into the digital arena. This year's state budget establishes the Office of Digital Innovation, Governance, Integrity, and Trust, known as the DIGIT Office. This groundbreaking office will regulate frontier AI developers and create crucial guardrails to protect children and teenagers from online harms and algorithmic exploitation.

Paving the Way: *State Budget Boosts Local Road Funding and Downtown Revitalization*

Our daily quality of life is shaped by the infrastructure around us, from the smoothness of our roads to the vibrant economic health of our business districts. This year's budget delivers direct, major investments into the physical foundations of Rochester.

Fixing Our Roads and Protecting City Services

Assemblymember Meeks and the Rochester delegation successfully fought to add a \$50 million restoration to the CHIPS (Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement) program. This brings total statewide local road funding to over \$698 million, sending more money straight to our local DPW crews to pave Rochester streets and repair potholes. Additionally, \$20 million in direct municipal assistance was delivered straight to the City of Rochester to protect essential, everyday city services.

A Vibrant Downtown Vision

The budget continues to back the ongoing \$75 million commitment to the High Falls State Park project, transforming our unique natural landmark into a downtown centerpiece. To ensure our urban business districts thrive,



the budget doubles down with a \$200 million investment split between the Downtown Revitalization Initiative and the New York Forward program, boosting local commerce and job creation.

Building Economic Opportunity: *Manufacturing, Biotech, and Restorative Justice*

A safe and thriving community begins with economic opportunity. This year's budget focuses heavily on upgrading our local workforce pipeline and building long term community wealth right here in Upstate New York.

Investing in the Future of Work

- **Manufacturing Modernization:** A new \$10 million Governor Manufacturing Modernization Program will help small and mid-sized local businesses integrate cutting-edge technologies and upgrade their equipment to stay competitive.
- **Biotech Innovation:** The state is investing \$65 million in the Bolstering Biotech Initiative, designed to attract high-paying research and development jobs directly to the Upstate region.
- **Targeted Workforce Pipelines:** Funding is being poured into equitable training programs, ranging from high-tech agricultural training to specialized equity programs within the legal cannabis supply chain.

Cannabis Equity and Enforcement

When it comes to the legal cannabis market, the budget focuses strictly on sustainability and restorative justice. \$25 million has been committed to the Community Grants Reinvestment Fund, which returns adult use tax revenues directly back into the neighborhoods that were historically harmed most by past drug policies. Simultaneously, the state is adding enforcement resources to shut down illicit, unregulated storefronts and providing \$10 million to help legitimate, licensed growers implement secure tracking systems.

Strengthening Our Social Infrastructure: *Support for Working Parents and Housing Stability*

At the kitchen table, working families are facing high costs. Assemblymember Meeks prioritized social infrastructure in this budget, ensuring that housing, childcare, and healthy food are treated as fundamental rights.

Housing Security

"Let me be clear: housing is a human right," says Assemblymember Meeks. To back this up, the budget secures \$90 million for community-based housing assistance and crisis intervention in underserved communities, alongside a robust \$186 million Housing Capital Projects Fund to support rental relief and long-term neighborhood affordability.

Feeding Our Communities

To combat food deserts and help families stretch their grocery budgets, \$2 million was secured for the Double Up Food Bucks New York program. This program matches SNAP benefits dollar for dollar at the Rochester Public Market, allowing low-income families to bring home double the fresh, locally grown produce while supporting our Upstate farmers.



District 137 Focus:

Bringing Direct Investments Home to Our Neighborhoods and Youth

While the large-scale regional wins will reshape Monroe County, Assemblymember Demond Meeks fought hard to secure targeted, direct financial investments for the specific community hubs, youth programs, and family services right here in the 137th Assembly District such as funding for public libraries, mentorship programs, and empowering local organizations. By funding grassroots initiatives, this budget builds a robust local workforce pipeline and lifts our next generation of leaders. The total investment in these community programs adds up to \$300,000.

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