



**House Bill 166**  
**Testimony in Support of Funding the Healthy Food Financing Initiative (600546)**

Gary Dougherty  
Director, State Government Affairs and Advocacy  
American Diabetes Association  
Senate Finance Committee – June 13, 2019

Chairman Dolan and Members of the Committee:

My name is Gary Dougherty and I am the Director of State Government Affairs and Advocacy for the American Diabetes Association.

On behalf of the more than 4.3 million Ohioans with or at risk for diabetes, the American Diabetes Association joins with several other partner organizations to strongly support continued funding for the Healthy Food Financing Initiative.

Nearly 25 million Americans live in areas known as food deserts, more than two million right here in Ohio, where they have limited access to nutritious foods - like that available at full-service grocery stores, farmers markets, or smaller retailers furnishing fresh meat and produce. Individuals and families living in these areas are often left without the ability or the means to purchase nutritious foods to prepare healthy meals, due to factors such as lack of transportation and high prices.

According to Feeding America's recently released annual report on local food insecurity, Ohio ranks 40<sup>th</sup> among the states with a 14.5% food insecurity rate.<sup>1</sup> This represents the percentage of the population that experienced limited or uncertain access to adequate food at some point during the year.

As you know, a healthy diet can help decrease risk for obesity and chronic diseases like diabetes. Access to healthy foods is equally important for people who have already been diagnosed with diabetes and must manage their disease carefully to prevent dangerous and costly complications such as amputation, blindness, kidney failure, heart attack, and even death.

Even after years of economic growth, national rates of food insecurity (which refers to limited or uncertain access to food resulting from inadequate financial sources) remain high - with 15 million

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<sup>1</sup> <https://map.feedingamerica.org/>

Gary Dougherty  
Director, State Government Affairs & Advocacy  
1-800-676-4065 Ext.4832  
[gdougherty@diabetes.org](mailto:gdougherty@diabetes.org)

1-800-DIABETES (342-2383)

**diabetes.org**  
**@AmDiabetesAssn**



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U.S. households experiencing food insecurity in 2017.<sup>2</sup> According to the ADA's Statement on Socioecological Determinants of Diabetes and Prediabetes, those with severe food insecurity have an approximately twofold risk of diabetes compared with those without food insecurity.<sup>3</sup> In the circumstances of food insecurity, it is possible that individuals rely more heavily on less nutritious, inexpensive, calorie-dense food alternatives, again highlighting the importance of affordable access to good-quality nutritious food.

An investment in the Healthy Food Financing Initiative of at least \$1 million in each fiscal year will help to eliminate food deserts and improve access to healthy food, which will, in turn, help Ohioans lead healthier lifestyles and decrease their risk for chronic disease, including diabetes.

Previous investments by the State of Ohio have triggered a 5:1 match in private, foundation, and other funding. Not only would a continuing and, ideally, increased appropriation serve even more Ohioans who lack access to fresh and healthy food, but such an investment would undoubtedly have an impact on the cost of diabetes in our state as well. People with diabetes have medical expenses more than double of those who do not have diabetes.

Diabetes costs an estimated \$12.3 billion in Ohio each year. Total direct medical costs for diagnosed and undiagnosed diabetes, prediabetes, and gestational diabetes in Ohio were estimated at \$9 billion in 2017. In addition, another \$3.3 billion was spent on indirect costs from lost productivity due to diabetes.

In 2017, an estimated 1.5 million American adults were newly diagnosed with diabetes – joined by an increasing number of children.<sup>4</sup> What is true nationwide is also true in Ohio. Every year, an estimated 74,000 more people in Ohio are diagnosed with diabetes.

You can surely see why the American Diabetes Association sees the Healthy Food Financing Initiative as a key element in our quest to prevent diabetes in Ohio and to offer those who have diabetes access to healthy foods so they can manage their disease and avoid its life-threatening complications.

To allow more Ohioans to benefit from access to fresh and healthy foods and experience better health outcomes as a result, the American Diabetes Association urges your support for an increased appropriation of at least \$1 million in each fiscal year for the Healthy Food Financing Initiative.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/key-statistics-graphics.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> <http://care.diabetesjournals.org/content/diacare/36/8/2430.full.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/pdfs/data/statistics/national-diabetes-statistics-report.pdf>

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