

House Bill 64
Testimony in Support of the Healthy Food Financing Initiative

Gary Dougherty
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American Diabetes Association
Senate Finance-Workforce Subcommittee – May 19, 2015 - 11:00am

Good morning Chairman Beagle and Members of the Committee.

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

On behalf of the 1.3 million Ohioans with diabetes, as well as the additional 3.1 million with prediabetes, the American Diabetes Association joins with several other partner organizations to strongly support the Healthy Food Financing Initiative which was added to House Bill 64 by the House of Representatives.

The Association would very much like to see the \$3.5 million (\$1.5 million in the first year and \$2 million in the second year) retained, but would also urge the Senate to consider increasing the appropriation to at least \$5 million in each year.

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 full-service grocery stores. Food deserts are disproportionately located in rural and urban settings. 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.

As you know, people need to maintain a healthy diet in order to decrease their risk for obesity and chronic diseases like diabetes. Access to healthy foods is equally important for people who have been diagnosed with diabetes and must manage their disease carefully to prevent dangerous complications.

The Healthy Food Financing Initiative will provide financing to support healthy food access in urban and rural low- and moderate-income areas throughout Ohio.

An investment in the Healthy Food Financing Initiative 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.

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The Association gratefully accepts gifts through your will.

The Mission of the American

Diabetes Association is to prevent and cure diabetes and to improve the lives of all people affected by diabetes.

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 billion in Ohio each year. Total direct medical costs for diagnosed and undiagnosed diabetes, prediabetes, and gestational diabetes in Ohio were estimated at \$9.1 billion in 2012. In addition, another \$2.9 billion was spent on indirect costs from lost productivity due to diabetes.

Diabetes is growing at an epidemic rate in the United States and what is true nationwide is also true in Ohio. Every year, an estimated 74,000 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 the terrible complications of heart disease, stroke, amputation, kidney disease, blindness, and even death.

The American Diabetes Association urges you to retain the Healthy Food Financing Initiative in the budget and, if possible, to increase the appropriation so more Ohioans could benefit from access to fresh and healthy foods.

Thank you very much and I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.