

Testimony in favor of the amendment for the Healthy Food Financing Initiative

Hello, my name is Rosemary Riley. I am a licensed dietitian and exercise physiologist. I am representing the Ohio Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, urging you to support the Healthy Food Financing Initiative at the level of \$10 million dollars to provide access to healthy food for our underserved, low and middle resource urban and rural communities.

As a dietitian and exercise physiologist I have focused much of my career in the area of weight management for individuals who wanted to better control their diabetes and other chronic health conditions through diet and exercise. Access to healthy foods is absolutely critical to their success in managing their weight, controlling their disease, improving the quality of their lives, and reducing their healthcare expenses.

“Shop the Perimeter” is what we tell people when they participate in Grocery Store tours sponsored by Local Matters, a non-profit organization here in Columbus that is teaching individuals about healthful food and addressing food insecurity in low resource neighborhoods. This means when you go to your supermarket spend most of your time and money on the foods that are on the perimeter, that is fresh fruits and vegetables, lean meats and seafood, lean dairy, and whole grains in the bread/cereal aisle. This is possible if you have supermarkets to shop at. Not every neighborhood in our cities or rural communities have supermarkets within a reasonable distance where you can choose from a variety of fruits and vegetables and other healthy foods that your family will consume and that fit your budget.

In fact, as many as 29.7 million people across the United States, 2 million here in Ohio, of those 500,000 are children at risk for chronic disease and diet-related deaths due to lack of access to healthy foods. The state of Ohio is ranked 6th among states with the least access to grocery stores according to government data. I am a proud Ohioan and this embarrasses me. Agriculture is our number one business but we can't provide access to healthy foods to our own citizens.

There are things that we can do. A program in Pennsylvania, called the Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative addressed the same issue there and increased access to healthy food for more than 400,000 people at the same time creating 5000 direct jobs, resulting in \$190 million in total investment due to the state's \$30 million seed funding. To have an impact, Ohio must invest enough to make the changes needed and allow for measurement of both economic and health outcomes. That is why we are encouraging your acceptance of the amendment that would increase the funding for this initiative to \$10 million dollars. It is also important that we monitor the impact of this program on both the economic and health outcomes of the communities served. We have several universities in Ohio with the expertise in both economic and health outcomes so that we can demonstrate the improvement in health and quality of life for the Ohio communities involved.

Please vote in favor of the amendment that will designate \$10 million to the Ohio Healthy Food Financing Initiative.