



House Bill 49
Testimony in Support of Funding the Healthy Food for Ohio Program

Gary Dougherty
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American Diabetes Association
Senate Finance Subcommittee on Health and Medicaid – May 24, 2017

Chairman Hackett and Members of the Committee:

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 continued funding for the Healthy Food for Ohio (HFFO) program.

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. 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 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.

Two years ago, Governor Kasich signed the FY 2016-2017 budget bill which contained an appropriation directing \$2 million to the effort to increase access to fresh and healthy foods to those living in food deserts and underserved areas. Private, foundation, and federal government funds were leveraged at a rate of more than 5:1 in order to fund six projects in Adams, Cuyahoga, Lucas, Richland, Summit, and Vinton Counties. Each of these counties has a rate of diagnosed diabetes greater than the state average of 10.3% with Vinton County ranking 88th among Ohio counties with a rate of 17%.

Many of you will recall that, since 2013, there has not been a single grocery store in Vinton County. Thanks to the state's initial investment and the ability of Finance Fund Capital



1 in 11
Americans has
diabetes today.



Every **23 seconds**,
someone in the
United States
is diagnosed
with diabetes.

More than
18,000
youth are
diagnosed with
type 1 diabetes
every year.

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Corporation to identify private investors, a brand new grocery store will open in McArthur in a few months.

A renewed investment in the Healthy Food for Ohio Program 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.

The Association is grateful for the \$500,000 appropriation included in the House-passed budget bill, but, with nearly \$60 million of projects in the pipeline, we are hopeful for an increased state investment.

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 for Ohio Program 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.

On behalf of the more than 4.4 million Ohioans living with or at risk of developing diabetes, the American Diabetes Association urges you to continue and ideally increase funding for the Healthy Food for Ohio Program so more Ohioans will benefit from access to fresh and healthy foods and experience better health outcomes as a result.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

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