

New Jersey Healthy Corner Store Initiative



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American Heart Association | American Stroke Association, The Food Trust and NJ YMCA State Alliance Applaud Senate Economic Growth Committee for Voting to Make Healthy Food Accessible for ALL in the Garden State!

Staff and volunteers praise the sponsors of S-3043 (Rice/Cruz-Perez)/A-4505 (Wimberly/Sumter)—Healthy Small Food Retailer Act—that would create a fund to support a Statewide Healthy Corner Store Initiative and thank members of the Senate Economic Growth Committee for passing the impactful bill; they encourage the full Senate and Assembly to follow suit.

Today, the Senate Economic Growth Committee approved S-3043/A-4505, the Healthy Small Food Retailer Act, which would create a public fund to increase the availability and sale of healthy, affordable food in local corner stores and bodegas in New Jersey communities underserved by supermarkets. The American Heart Association, The Food Trust, and the NJ YMCA State Alliance praise the legislative sponsors for making healthy food access a priority, and thank members of the Senate Economic Growth Committee for passage of the bill. They are now encouraging the full Senate and the Assembly to swiftly follow suit.

The 'Healthy Small Food Retailer Act' is modeled after the New Jersey Healthy Corner Store Initiative—a partnership of The Food Trust, New Jersey Partnership for Healthy Kids and the American Heart Association | American Stroke Association—that is successfully up-and-running in several pilot municipalities with local partners providing to small retailers the education, training and other support they need to profitably stock, market and sell healthy, affordable and culturally appropriate food.

In just three years, the small, localized public health and economic development strategy is yielding impressive results in increasing people's access to affordable, healthy food. It is also bolstering economic development efforts by generating local jobs and capturing retail dollars that would otherwise be spent outside of the community. S-3043/A4505 would create a state fund to support the replication of these impactful local NJ Healthy Corner Store innovations and bring them to a greater scale in additional New Jersey communities that lack access to affordable, fresh foods. A separate state appropriation is needed to dedicate resources to the fund should the full Legislature and Governor approve S-3043/A-4505.

"Far too many New Jerseyans live in communities where they are unable to make healthy food choices because there are no well-stocked grocery or convenience stores in their neighborhoods," said Corinne Orlando, director of Government Relations for the American Heart Association. "By tapping into a community's existing retail footprint, the New Jersey Corner Store Initiative is removing barriers to food access, enabling more people to make the healthy choice, the easy choice. The American Heart Association

applauds the sponsors of the NJ Small Food Retailers Act and the members of the Senate Economic Growth Committee for their commitment to ensuring ALL residents of the Garden State have access to the healthy foods they need to nutritiously feed their families.”

The U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates that 340,000 New Jersey residents are living in food deserts across the state, while The Reinvestment Fund suggests even more alarming numbers with as much as 10% of the state’s population lacking access to healthy food options. The incidence of obesity is disproportionately higher in lower-income neighborhoods, many of the same places where residents lack access to stores that sell healthy foods. In 2013, New Jersey was one of six states that saw a slight increase in adult obesity, and the state’s rate of obesity among toddlers who reside in low-income communities is the second highest in the nation.¹

“Disparity in food access is having a profound impact on the wellbeing of the New Jersey families living in underserved communities. Not only is the incidence of obesity and diet-related disease higher in neighborhoods where residents lack access to stores that sell nutritious foods, with few, if any, supermarkets these areas are also cut off from the economic benefits that accompany the anchor stores: steady jobs, increased property values, a solid tax base; and the additional retail development that often follows from these,” said Darrin Anderson, Associate Executive Director of the NJ YMCA State Alliance. “The NJ Small Food Retailer Act is an important first step in reinvesting in these communities and bringing the fundamental health and economic benefits to all citizens of the Garden State,” he concluded.

To qualify as a designated “Healthy Corner Store” the small food retailers agree to display sanctioned marketing materials created by The Food Trust— including recipe cards — to indicate healthy food options; introduce at least four new healthy food products from two different food groups; and agree to periodic progress-assessment visits. In return, the stores are eligible for training and technical assistance that enable them to profitably stock and sell the new, healthy food items, as well as advertising, marketing, and promotional materials to attract new customers and bolster profits.

“Everyone deserves to have healthy food choices available in their community. We know from over 10 years of corner store work that began in Philadelphia that small food retailers—often thought of as a source of unhealthy foods—can be key partners in the effort to improve access to healthy, affordable foods. When healthier food options are available, consumers will purchase them, leading to better health outcomes,” said John Weidman, Deputy Executive Director of The Food Trust. “With an estimated 5,600 corner stores existing in New Jersey, these venues are a critical component in addressing healthy food access in the Garden State. The time for a statewide scale-up of the program, starting with the adoption of this legislation and following with a dedicated state appropriation, could not be better. I thank the sponsors of the ‘Healthy Small Food Retailer Act’ and members of the Senate Economic Growth Committee for recognizing that a public investment will create jobs and improve health.”

¹ Levi J, S. L. (2014). *The State of Obesity: Better Policies for a Healthier America*. Trust for America's Health

About the American Heart Association | American Stroke Association

The American Heart Association is the nation's oldest, largest voluntary organization devoted to fighting cardiovascular diseases and stroke.

Founded by six cardiologists in 1924, the organization now includes more than 22.5 million volunteers and supporters working tirelessly to eliminate these diseases. The American Heart Association funds innovative research, fights for stronger public health policies and provides lifesaving tools and information to save and improve lives.

The American Heart Association is the nation's leader in CPR education training. We help people understand the importance of healthy lifestyle choices. We provide science-based treatment guidelines to healthcare professionals to help ensure the best treatment for every patient, every time. We educate lawmakers, policy makers and the public as we advocate for changes to protect and improve the health of our communities.

About The Food Trust

For more than 20 years, The Food Trust has been working to ensure that everyone has access to affordable, nutritious food and information to make healthy decisions. The Food Trust's comprehensive approach includes improving food environments and teaching nutrition education in schools; working with corner store owners to increase healthy offerings and helping customers make healthier choices; managing farmers' markets in communities that lack access to affordable produce; and encouraging grocery store development in underserved communities. Learn more about The Food Trust at www.thefoodtrust.org.

About the New Jersey YMCA State Alliance

Incorporated as a 501 (c) (3) not-for-profit corporation, the New Jersey YMCA State Alliance is comprised of 41 corporate YMCA associations and 79 branches from across the garden state. Together, New Jersey YMCAs work together to strengthen the foundations of community to better serve the people of New Jersey. To that end, the New Jersey YMCA State Alliance: Monitors critical public policy issues and advocates for member Ys; fosters statewide communication among YMCAs and collaborating nonprofit partners; coordinates statewide initiatives aligned with three focus areas: youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility. For more information, visit www.njymca.org

About The New Jersey Healthy Corner Store Initiative

The New Jersey Healthy Corner Store Initiative is focused on increasing healthy food access in areas underserved by supermarkets by linking community partners with corner store owners to help the small retailers profitably stock, promote and sell affordable fresh food to their customers. The goal is to expand the scope of the program by replicating its success and bringing best practices to more communities in New Jersey that lack access to affordable, fresh food. The statewide initiative is being led by the American Heart Association, New Jersey Partnership for Healthy Kids and The Food Trust, with support from The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Visit njhealthycornerstores.heart.org for more information, and follow the New Jersey Healthy Corner Store initiative on Twitter at [#njcornerstores](https://twitter.com/njcornerstores).



