

## **Improving the State of Food Deserts in Los Angeles County and South-Central LA**

### **Target audience: Senate Agricultural Committee**

One million households are affected by food insecurity with 37% of Los Angeles households living in a food desert. A food desert is defined as a geographical area with limited access to healthy and nutritious foods at an affordable price. Families impacted by food insecurity, especially those living in food deserts, experience poor physical health outcomes including developmental delays, reduced school readiness with poor academic outcomes. The long-term impacts in adulthood include higher rates of chronic illness and mortality, reduced opportunities for employment and financial success. Food deserts disproportionately impact minority groups and individuals with disabilities.

### **Goals:**

- Improve access to nutritious and affordable foods with the goal of improving childhood and adult outcomes for families impacted by food insecurity.
- Increase funding and resources to better provide families with support (financial/closer location/affordability) of foods.

### **Measurements of success:**

- Identify specific geographical that fit criteria of food desert including level of severity.
- After changes/modifications – reassess food access and improved health outcomes.

### **Current resources:**

- Call 211 to speak with someone about services available in your area.
- Local foodbanks; school meals; CalFresh; Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC).

### **Alternative Strategies:**

1. Loosen restrictive criteria that act as barriers for receiving additional financial and or food resource related (e.g. SNAP, Medicaid, WIC, TANF). Although additional funding may be needed for these efforts, more families will be able to access services to reduce the risk of food insecurity and combat the challenge of food deserts.
2. Use federal/state funding to create closer/more accessible locations for nutritious foods.  
Pros: Increased access to areas to purchase nutritious foods within closer walking distance to remove barriers such as transportation.  
Cons: Funding is required.

3. Place regulations on food pricing – with reasonable limits on the amount that would be excessive to charge for nutritious foods based on cost of living and overall income data of different regions.

Pros: Improved affordability

Cons: Regulation limits ability to carry out.

### **Evaluation of Policy:**

#### A. Implement:

- Provide increased funding for current programs that help alleviate food insecurity with specific target to help families living in food deserts.
- Reduce unnecessary eligibility barriers to receiving these resources.
- Create new programs of community outreach monitor for and increase access to nutritious foods in these areas to address physical access, affordability, and related barriers.

#### B. Monitoring:

- Specific committee to oversee and assess needed changes to the programs.
- National data of employment, food deserts, and reports of food insecurity
- Presentation of data at regular intervals with each of the successive changes as suggested.

#### C. Evaluation:

- Re-evaluate periodically for status and success of each measured change.

### Resources:

- [cafoodbanks.org/find-food/Food Deserts in Los Angeles – Food Deserts \(food-deserts.com\)](http://cafoodbanks.org/find-food/Food%20Deserts%20in%20Los%20Angeles%20-%20Food%20Deserts%20(food-deserts.com))