

For Immediate Release
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Leaders from Across the Country Speak Out in Support of Commitments to Provide Millions of People Access to Healthy, Affordable Food in Underserved Communities

First Lady Michelle Obama Announced the Commitments to open or expand over 1,500 stores today

American Public Health Association (APHA)

“It is unacceptable that millions of children in this country are denied access to fresh, nutritious and affordable food. Bringing grocery stores into impoverished areas is a major step toward reducing the scourge of premature death and diet-related diseases, including high blood pressure, diabetes and obesity largely attributed to food deserts. However, to ensure communities across the country reap the benefits of this important effort, it must be accompanied by other health promotion initiatives that improve surrounding neighborhoods such as offering safe, equitable transportation options and increased education on the value of eating healthy,” said Georges C. Benjamin, MD, FACP, FACEP (E), Executive Director of APHA.

Feeding America

“Low-income and food insecure families face many barriers today to obtaining a nutritious diet, including inadequate resources and access to healthy, affordable food. As an organization that provides food and groceries to nearly six million people at risk of hunger each week, we enthusiastically support the First Lady and PHA’s new initiative to increase access in communities where the need is great,” said Vicki Escarra, President and CEO of Feeding America, the nation’s largest domestic hunger-relief organization.

Food Marketing Institute

“When it comes to feeding families and enriching the life of a community, America’s supermarkets and grocery stores are among our nation’s greatest assets,” says Leslie G. Sarasin, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Food Marketing Institute. “As evidenced by the commitment articulated today, the food retail industry continues and underscores its proud role in improving the access to healthier food for those in underserved areas.”

The Food Trust

“Every family deserves access to affordable healthy food, and this partnership with the fresh food industry will improve health and create good jobs. The First Lady’s leadership is paving the way for healthier food for everyone,” said Yael Lehmann, Executive Director, The Food Trust.

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)

“The NAACP is supporting a multi-pronged approach to combating childhood obesity,” stated NAACP Health Director Shavon Arline. “Childhood obesity is a problem of

almost epidemic proportion; sadly, major disparities exist among the obesity rates of children based on race and poverty. Successful efforts to combat childhood obesity will require many different elements, including access to healthy foods and an increase in physical activity. It all starts with education, however, so that parents and children both learn the myriad of problems associated with childhood obesity as well as the solutions.”

National Council of La Raza (NCLR)

"Lack of access to healthy and affordable food in minority and low-income neighborhoods is one of the key reasons for the alarming increase in obesity, especially among children. PHA's partnership with national and local grocers to help eradicate these 'food deserts' is an important step forward in ensuring that all families can conveniently purchase cheaper, healthier food," stated Janet Murguía, President and CEO of NCLR.

National League of Cities

"We commend the First Lady on this important step forward on the path to healthier cities and towns. The presence of supermarkets and the availability of fresh and healthy foods in low-income areas are key elements of the solution to a childhood obesity epidemic that now confronts communities of all sizes across America. This exciting commitment by participating retailers will open the door to new jobs and healthier lifestyles at a time when both are critically needed," said Don Borut, Executive Director, National League of Cities.

Honorable William H. Frist, MD

"Increasing access to affordable, nutritious food enables more Americans to make healthier choices. When the private sector partners with government, America wins. I am proud to serve as honorary vice-chair for the Partnership for a Healthier America and help lead this effort," said Honorable William H. Frist, MD, Honorary Vice Chair of the Partnership for a Healthier America.

PolicyLink

“Where you live significantly impacts how you live, and yet millions of Americans today do not have neighborhood access to a grocery store,” said Angela Glover Blackwell, Founder and CEO of PolicyLink, a national research and action institute advancing economic and social equity. “In places where healthy food access has increased, residents’ eating habits have been shown to improve, especially in low-income areas and communities of color where obesity rates are highest and where lack of access is most severe. Today’s announcement by the First Lady signals a strong commitment to bridging this access gap, and the importance of public-private partnerships in improving community health. Together, we can secure a stronger, healthier America.”

Share Our Strength

"At Share Our Strength, we're working to make sure that every child in America gets the nutritious food he or she needs to learn, grow and thrive. Improving access to healthy food is key to our success, and we applaud this new effort to build or expand grocery stores in low-access areas. This commitment will open the door to affordable, nutritious

food for millions of Americans and will help us get closer to our goal of No Kid Hungry by 2015,” said Josh Wachs, Chief Strategy Officer, Share Our Strength.

Urban League

“As of June 2011, the black unemployment rate is 16.2%, creating both a jobs and health crisis in our communities. Stark disparities exist in hundreds of neighborhoods around the country where the availability of nutritious, affordable, and high quality food is very limited – particularly in low-income areas and communities of color. Today’s announcement represents a critical commitment to expanding access to healthy, affordable food for nearly 10 million Americans who would otherwise not have it. While we know there’s more work to be done, with 23.5 million Americans currently living in low-access areas, we believe this commitment is a great achievement and we support efforts to reduce health disparities, improve the health of families, strengthen local economies and create jobs,” said Marc H. Morial, President and CEO of the National Urban League.

US Conference of Mayors (USCM)

"We commend the efforts of First Lady Michelle Obama and The Partnership for a Healthier America to help make healthy food choices available to all, especially individuals in low-income and underserved areas. We strongly support efforts to provide everyone regardless of where they live, with access to nutritious and affordable food," said Conference of Mayors CEO and Executive Director Tom Cochran.