



MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the House Committee on Commerce and Trade

From: Gilda Z. Jacobs, President/CEO, Michigan League for Public Policy

Date: March 14, 2017

Re: Support for House Bill 4207

On behalf of the Michigan League for Public Policy, which advocates for children and families who are low income, I urge the Committee to support House Bill 4207, which will target Community Revitalization Program (CRP) funds in a way that will have a direct positive impact on the health and well-being of our state's urban residents.

A shortage of well-stocked grocery stores in many communities means that nearly two million Michiganders, including around 300,000 children, have limited or no access to fresh, healthy food, and must rely instead on smaller convenience stores where the offerings are typically high-calorie with low nutritional value. Poor nutrition is associated with a host of poor health outcomes such as heart disease and type 2 diabetes, decreased academic performance among children, and untold societal losses in the form of added healthcare costs and reduced worker productivity. The absence of full-service supermarkets and other stores selling healthy food has a disparate impact in areas of high poverty, where many residents already face significant barriers to good health and may not have a reliable vehicle to travel many miles to the nearest grocery store.

By directing a portion of existing CRP funds to urban food initiatives, House Bill 4207 will promote job creation in downtown areas and ensure that the adults and children living in currently underserved cities have the fuel they need to lead healthy, productive lives—all without increasing costs to taxpayers.

As you craft policy to address the state's food needs, the League would ask you to keep in mind that the problem of insufficient access to nutritious food is not limited to urban areas. In supporting House Bill 4207, we also express our eagerness to work with the sponsor and committee members on any future legislation to expand the healthy choices available to all people facing this need in Michigan, regardless of where they live.

Thank you for your consideration of our position on this important health issue. Please feel free to contact me with any questions. We stand ready to provide additional information regarding access to healthy food in Michigan.

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