



FUEL FAMILIES WITH HEALTHY FOODS

"In order to go to a grocery store and get decent food, I actually have to go outside of my community."

-Melissa, Detroit

THE ROAD AHEAD

To help residents put healthier food on the table, Michigan must:



Encourage schools to purchase healthy food grown in Michigan.



Help families with low incomes get fresh produce.



Encourage residents to build up savings by eliminating the asset test for food assistance.



TIME FOR A TUNE-UP

One in 7 Michiganders don't have enough to eat and an estimated 1.8 million live in communities with few affordable healthy food options, leading to incalculable costs in healthcare for diet-related diseases and unfulfilled potential among students and workers. In the state's fight to end hunger and ensure proper nutrition among its residents, its robust agriculture industry is an invaluable asset. Increasing access to key nutrition programs centered on Michigan's farm bounty will empower families with low incomes to make dietary choices that reduce healthcare costs, promote academic achievement and worker productivity, and boost local economies.



ABOUT THE OWNER'S MANUAL FOR MICHIGAN

We all agree Michigan needs a major tune-up. And like the real vehicles we all depend on, it takes a lot of components and tools to make our state go. Without good jobs and training, reliable healthcare, quality education, strong families, and a safe environment, our state can't run properly. That's why we've created a clear and comprehensive plan to help lawmakers on the road ahead—the Owner's Manual for Michigan.

REPAIRING THE PROBLEM:



HOW TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOOD

- 1. Expand the 10 Cents a Meal program.** “10 Cents a Meal” is a farm-to-school pilot program of the Michigan Department of Education that gives schools incentive funding of up to 10 cents per meal to purchase fresh food grown in Michigan. Now in its third year, the program has spurred increased sales for more than 130 local farms and related businesses. More than 134,000 students in participating school districts have shown improvements in dietary knowledge and preference for and consumption of fresh produce. The 43 counties in which school districts are eligible to apply for the program, however, do not include Macomb, Oakland and Wayne, where nearly 40% of Michigan children age 6 to 17 live. The program must be expanded into those areas.
- 2. Expand the Double Up Food Bucks program statewide.** The price of fresh fruits and vegetables can present difficulty for shoppers trying to feed their families on a tight budget. The Double Up Food Bucks program enables people using the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to double the value of up to \$20 per day in food assistance benefits spent on fresh produce at participating farmers markets and grocery stores. By helping people stretch their SNAP dollars further, the program encourages healthier eating and frees up money in the family budget for other basic needs like healthcare, utility bills and school supplies.
- 3. Reverse the state’s decision to apply an asset test to food assistance.** To receive food assistance in Michigan, families currently cannot have more than \$5,000 in countable assets (including checking and savings accounts), with some exemptions for vehicles. This policy discourages families from saving the small amounts needed to handle temporary crises or setbacks, and has administrative costs for the state. Given already high caseloads for eligibility specialists, eliminating the asset test could streamline the state’s efforts and help families put food on the table and build up savings for emergencies.

SHARING THE ROAD

Equity is of utmost importance when it comes to building a better Michigan. Because an unhealthy diet is a significant obstacle to health, academic success and earning potential, disparities in healthy food affordability and access contribute to persistent inequities in Michigan’s poverty rates. Low-income, urban neighborhoods of color have the least availability of grocery stores and supermarkets compared with both low- and high-income White communities. In addition to communities of color, children in families with low incomes, seniors, rural residents and people with disabilities are more likely to face barriers accessing fresh and healthy foods. Bolstering resources for high-quality food among underserved populations is an important step in ensuring that all Michiganders have the opportunity to live a healthy life and reach their full potential.

