

Fund the Healthy Purchase Pilot

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»» ISSUE

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans suggests that everyone eat more fruits and vegetables. Low-income Californians, including food stamp recipients, face unique challenges in meeting this goal of increased produce consumption. Two major barriers often exist: access and costs. Grocers in low-income communities who accept food stamps are not required to offer fresh produce, so some food stamp recipients may have difficulty accessing fresh fruits and vegetables in their community. Cost is also an issue. Research has shown that low-income households face higher food prices than other consumers. Faced with limited resources and generally higher costs, food stamp recipients may be tempted to stretch their limited budgets by buying less expensive, calorie-dense, nutrient-poor foods.

In September 2006, the Governor signed AB 2384 (Leno) which would establish the Healthy Purchase Pilot program to make fresh produce more accessible and affordable for low-income residents. However, funding for the pilot was not included in the Governor's January budget proposal.

»» NEED

The Healthy Purchase Pilot has two complementary components. First, it would provide corner-store grocers with the support and assistance needed to manage the challenges of offering fresh produce. Second, it would seek to make healthy purchases better economic choices for food stamp recipients by utilizing their Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards to deliver a financial return. For example, a food stamp participant using the card to purchase \$1 worth of fresh broccoli might receive 40 cents back on the card. This innovative approach would use available technology to help Californians be healthy.

With California about to embark on a monumental reform of the state's health care system, it must, as the Governor consistently insists, invest in prevention and wellness. Given the high costs of diet related disease to our state's health care system, investing in healthy eating makes smart fiscal sense.

»» REQUEST

CFPA requests the legislature take the following action:

Action: Fund the Healthy Purchase Pilot	Invest the modest funds needed to launch the pilot in as many as seven counties and provide a rigorous evaluation.
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»» HISTORY

AB 2384 went from idea to law in just one legislative session. Along the way it garnered bi-partisan support and Governor Schwarzenegger continues to praise the bill. Time is of the essence with regard to launching the pilot as the bill has a sunset date and the pilot should operate before the current EBT contract expires in 2010.

»» OUTCOMES

This innovative pilot has the potential to increase healthy eating, reduce health care costs, and inform future state and federal nutrition policies.