

# SB 48 (Alquist) Healthy Food Retail Innovations Fund



## Problem

California is facing an obesity epidemic. In the last decade, obesity rates in the state doubled. Rates are highest and have risen the most among people of color, who also face the highest rates of obesity-related health problems like diabetes and heart disease. A 2005 study found that, because of the rapid rise of obesity rates, today's youth may live shorter lives than their parents.



Individuals make choices about their diet, but their decisions are affected by the food available in their local environment. Studies have demonstrated that when people have improved access to healthy food, they make healthier choices about their diet. For example, one study found that having access to a nearby supermarket increased fruit and vegetable consumption by 32% among African Americans.



Unfortunately, too many Californians face unhealthy food environments. A recent study by the California Center for Public Health Advocacy found that Californians have 4 times as many fast food restaurants and convenience stores compared to supermarkets and produce vendors. Studies also have found that low-income communities and communities of color often lack access to healthy food in their communities, and are less likely to have access to cars. Seniors also face challenges in accessing healthy food, since almost a quarter of their households do not own a car.

## Solution



California can ensure that all communities have access to healthy foods. SB 48 would establish a **retail innovations investment fund** to provide limited, one-time support to assist in the development or improvement of healthy food retail options in underserved, low-income communities using a combination of public and private funds. Business plan development, feasibility studies, refrigeration units, outside technical assistance, and other start-up costs could be covered.

SB 48, the Healthy Food Retail Innovations Fund would:

- Provide residents of underserved communities with retail food markets that offer high quality fruit, vegetables, and other healthy foods.
- Encourage local economic development in low-income, underserved communities.



A similar policy passed in Pennsylvania in 2003 has sparked new or renovated stores in 14 underserved low-income communities, and 8 additional projects are already in the next funding pipeline. The stores will create and retain 2,552 jobs, and improvements in eating behaviors are being documented in a study funded by the National Institutes of Health. The program has been commended by the National Governor's Association and the United States Environmental Protection Agency.



SB 48 already has broad-based support from business, health, civil rights, and other organizations. To add your support, see [www.policylink.org/HealthAndPlace/TakeAction.html](http://www.policylink.org/HealthAndPlace/TakeAction.html).