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SENATE AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE PASSES 2012 FARM BILL KEEP ME INFORMED

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Contact:

Milly Hawk Daniel (212) 502-6492 milly@policylink.org

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Senate Agriculture Committee Passes 2012 Farm Bill With Broad Bipartisan Support; Includes \$125 Million For National Healthy Food Financing Initiative (Hffi) To Expand Fresh Food Retail In Underserved Communities Across The U.S.

For Immediate Release

April 27, 2012 – New York, NY – Yesterday with wide bipartisan support, the Senate Agriculture Committee passed the Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act of 2012 (also known as the Farm Bill), which for the first time will officially establish a national Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI) at the United States Department of Agriculture with \$125 million. The inclusion of HFFI is a significant win for community leaders from across the country seeking to bring healthy food and jobs to their communities. PolicyLink and its partners, The Reinvestment Fund, and The Food Trust, along with local, state and national healthy food advocates, have been working for many years to expand fresh food access in underserved areas throughout the U.S.

The Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act of 2012 -- authored by Committee Chairwoman Senator Debbie Stabenow and Ranking Member Senator Pat Roberts -- is an omnibus, multi-year bill that legislates policies and authorizes programs for food and nutrition aid, agriculture trade and marketing programs, rural development assistance, and other programs. The addition of HFFI will significantly strengthen nation-wide efforts to remove barriers to having fresh and healthy foods available -- particularly in low-income communities and communities of color. It will also help to revitalize communities by bringing in new, vibrant, healthy food retail and by creating and preserving quality jobs for local residents.

"PolicyLink applauds the Senate Agriculture Committee, especially Senators Stabenow and Roberts, for their bi-partisan leadership and commitment to improving community health by improving access to healthy food," said PolicyLink President Judith Bell. "Supermarkets and other healthy food retail represent more than healthy food choices -- they are also about creating jobs, supporting community businesses, and revitalizing neighborhoods. The incorporation of HFFI into the Farm Bill is a powerful step towards creating equitable and sustainable access to fresh and healthy foods across America."

The HFFI legislation was first introduced in 2011 by Senate lead sponsor Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) and is modeled after the highly successful Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative. Launched in 2004, that program used a public/private partnership to leverage \$30 million of state seed money into \$190 million of total investment-- creating or retaining over 5,000 jobs and opening 88 new or improved fresh food retail outlets throughout the state. The program has since been replicated in New York, Illinois, New Orleans, California, and New Jersey.

Yesterday's Farm Bill reauthorization, which was approved by a vote of 16 to 5, marks a major turning point in those efforts, and represents a significant milestone for communities across the nation currently struggling without adequate healthy food access. A complete copy of the Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act of 2012 is available on the Senate Agriculture Committee website at http://www.aq.senate.gov/issues/farm-bill.

For more information on the national Healthy Food Financing Initiative specifically, please visit our website at www.PolicyLink.org/HFFI.

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PolicyLink is a national research and advocacy institute advancing economic and social equity. Founded in 1999, PolicyLink helps create sustainable communities of opportunity that offer access to quality jobs, affordable housing, good schools, transportation, and the benefits of healthy food and physical activity. The organization is based in Oakland (Calif.), with offices in New York City, Los Angeles, and Washington DC.

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