

U.S. SENATOR KRISTEN GILLIBRAND ANNOUNCES THE NATIONAL HFFFI

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For Immediate Release

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U.S. SENATOR KRISTEN GILLIBRAND ANNOUNCES THE NATIONAL HEALTHY FOOD FINANCING INITIATIVE (HFFI)

New federal legislation will expand fresh food access in underserved areas and communities of color; President Obama has called for nearly \$400 million in investments in new and expanded supermarkets, farmers' markets and other food retailers across the country

New York, NY – April 12, 2010 – PolicyLink, The Reinvestment Fund (TRF), and The Food Trust joined with U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, New York City Council Speaker Christine Quinn, and U.S. Representative Nydia Velazquez (D-NY) at a press conference today in Manhattan to discuss the introduction of the national Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI).

The new legislation, authored by Senator Gillibrand, and being introduced in the House by Representatives Allyson Schwartz (D-PA), Earl Blumenauer (D-OR), and Velazquez would invest \$1 billion through loans and grants to help build approximately 2,100 new grocery stores in high need areas across the country, of which more than 200 are estimated for New York City. Additionally, it is projected that the initiative will create an estimated 200,000 new jobs nationally, including an estimated 26,000 in New York.

"Obesity and diabetes rates are reaching crisis proportions in our country and it is time to take aggressive action," said Senator Gillibrand. "Millions of New Yorkers do not have access to fresh, healthy food. By building new grocery stores in underserved areas across the state we can give people the opportunity to live longer, healthier lives, save billions in health care costs, and create tens of thousands of good-paying jobs. I am proud to work with President Obama and First Lady Michele Obama on their efforts to combat obesity in America. We cannot back down from this fight."

In his FY2011 budget proposal, President Barack Obama addressed the urgent need for bringing healthy food options to underserved communities by calling for multi-year, multi-million dollar investments in new and expanded supermarkets, farmers markets and other food stores. The public-private grant and loan program would dramatically reduce the roughly 23 million Americans who have limited access to full-service supermarkets and create tens of thousands of retail and construction jobs in low-income communities.

"We have a health crisis in this country, in terms of obesity, diabetes, heart disease and high blood pressure, that is disproportionately impacting low-income people and communities of color," said Angela

Glover Blackwell, Founder & CEO of PolicyLink. "Nationally, only 8 percent of African Americans currently live in a census tract with a supermarket, and far too many Blacks and Latinos reside in areas underserved by a grocery store. To ensure that people are eating healthy diets, we must push to make healthier choices available in their neighborhoods. With the announcement of this new legislation, we are taking a pro-active step towards expanding fresh food access and creating jobs in communities that have struggled without both for far too long."

For more than a year, PolicyLink, The Food Trust and The Reinvestment Fund have been working with the Obama Administration and Congress on a national version of the successful Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative.

(For more information on the Pennsylvania and national efforts, please visit:

<http://www.trfund.com/financing/realestate/NFFFI.html>)

Since the PA program began in 2004, the state has invested \$30 million which has supported \$190 million in total project investments. These 83 projects have provided more than 400,000 Pennsylvanians with healthier food choices in their communities and have created or preserved 5,000 jobs and 1.6 million square feet of food retail space.

The Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative, championed by State Rep. Dwight Evans, was seeded with state funds and is widely recognized for its innovative design and purpose. It has served as a model for



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similar efforts developing in other states, including New York, New Jersey, Illinois, Louisiana and Colorado.

"The reason we have communities where there is little access to fresh food is because business owners closed grocery stores or didn't want to invest in the first place," Rep. Evans said. "But across Pennsylvania, we've met wonderful grocers who understand that their businesses are vibrant neighborhood anchors. The Fresh Food Financing Initiative provides expertise and funding, but it's the business owners with vision and a willingness to invest in their communities whom I applaud. They've made the PA program a success and a model for the whole nation."

Rep. Allyson Schwartz, who introduced a bipartisan resolution in the House last year, is developing policies with other members of the House to address the problem of food access nationally.

"Our nation faces an obesity epidemic and children are developing chronic diseases like high blood pressure and diabetes at a growing rate," Schwartz said. "In Pennsylvania, we have taken great steps toward increasing access to supermarkets that offer healthier food choices and, in Congress, my colleagues and I are exploring ways to create a national program modeled on the Fresh Food Financing Initiative. President Obama's attention to this issue in his FY 2011 Budget and Senator Gillibrand's announcement today to go a long way toward our shared goals."

"Nearly one third of children in America are overweight or obese. The efforts of the First Lady, President Obama and Congress to increase the availability of affordable, nutritious food in neighborhoods across the country are a vital step in addressing this childhood obesity epidemic," says Yael Lehmann, Executive Director of The Food Trust, which conducted outreach to engage communities and store operators in the program. "Access to healthy food is essential to healthy children and healthy communities."

"The US Department of the Treasury played a critical role in helping us attract the private investment needed to bring supermarkets to low-income communities where access to healthy food choices can be limited," stated Jeremy Nowak, President and CEO of The Reinvestment Fund, which managed the PA program and raised the private capital match for it. "We are working with the Low Income Investment Fund to launch a similar program for the State of New York. Across the country, we can see how these investments drive the health and economic vitality of communities, particularly during difficult

economic times. Supermarkets not only improve access to affordable, healthy foods, they also bring much-needed jobs."

For more information:

- Questions about the success of the PA program and the financing model: Patricia Smith, 215-574-5898 or patricia.smith@trfund.com
- Questions about food access and health questions: The Food Trust deputy executive director John Weidman: 267-679-4460 (cell) or jweidman@thefoodtrust.org
- Questions about the national Healthy Food Financing Initiative policy efforts: Dan Lavoie, Deputy Communications Director, PolicyLink, 510-418-1208 (cell) or dan@policylink.org.

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