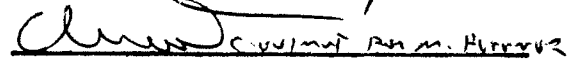


November 10, 20 10


Health Officer

Jefferson County Board of Health
November 10, 2010

Resolution in Support of Improved Food Access and Education in Jefferson County

WHEREAS healthy food – defined as the product of a system where food is grown, processed, transported and marketed in a healthy and environmentally sustainable manner – has a significant influence on human health, environmental quality, economic development and therefore the prosperity of our community.ⁱ

WHEREAS food access – defined by the World Health Organization as the availability, knowledge and sufficient resources to secure adequate quantities of safe and nutritious food to maintain a healthy diet – is the foundation of an equitable food system and is a community's basic right, which significantly impacts both human and economic wellbeing.ⁱⁱ

WHEREAS nutrition is essential for growth, development, health and wellbeing, and deficiencies exist in Americans' diets resulting from poor food access and lack of education, preventing informed decision-making and compounding Alabama's high obesity rate.ⁱⁱⁱ

WHEREAS possessing the necessary nutritional education and knowledge for consumers and providers to make informed choices about what and how much to eat is integral to health and wellbeing; and

WHEREAS local food policy councils catalyze positive change in the food system through collaboration between the government, public and private organizations by overcoming barriers, improving access to healthy foods, educating the community and encouraging the local food economy.

WHEREAS the Jefferson County food system impacts: health inequities, economic inequities, food deserts and food imbalance, school systems, agricultural and community land use. (Appendix A)

WHEREAS the United States Department of Agriculture, United States Food and Drug and Administration, and the Center for Disease Control are partnering with local communities to improve access to healthy food and produce through policy change and program implementation.

WHEREAS the Jefferson County Board of Health hereby recognizes that obesity resulting from limited healthy food access is a serious health threat to the wellbeing of both children and adults in Jefferson County.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED the Jefferson County Board of Health hereby:

1. supports improving access to healthy food, including fresh produce, through policy, system, and environmental changes.
2. supports the elimination of health inequities resulting from limited food access by advocating for policies that improve food access.

3. supports the establishment of a local food policy council to improve coordination and collaboration between government agencies and the community to eliminate barriers preventing healthy food access and food security.
4. encourages the elimination of food imbalance conditions in Birmingham and improved access to healthy food, including fresh produce in underserved communities, by advocating for incentives and zoning efforts to establish public markets and increase the number of grocery and healthy corner stores.
5. advocates for policies and practices to incorporate more fresh produce into schools, food pantries, and community kitchens to improve the nutritional quality of food offered to children and those in poverty.
6. supports nutrition education programs for individuals and institutions as part of an overall strategy for improving our community's eating habits.
7. advocates for the adoption of land use policies and zoning regulations that encourage citizens to produce as much food as possible at home, in community gardens and urban farms, as well as educate and empower citizens to responsibly grow and distribute food to Jefferson County residents, institutions, and businesses.
8. supports all Jefferson County municipalities and partner organizations in implementing policies to improve food production and distribution within all communities, create new economic opportunities and initiatives that encourage investment of food & farm production, support educational programs that inspire and empower the community to make healthy purchasing decisions, and encourage community and stakeholder collaboration.

Appendix A: Jefferson County Food System Impacts

Health Inequities

- Being overweight or obese increases the risk for adverse health effects including Type 2 Diabetes, heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, certain cancers and other debilitating diseases.^{iv} In Jefferson County, 71% of residents are overweight or obese.
- An effective food system can increase the availability and consumption of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, low fat dairy and meats and decrease added sugar and sodium, which helps reduce obesity, diabetes and other diet-related diseases.

Economic Inequities

- According to the 2009 Census, 16.3% of Americans, or 43.6 million people, live in poverty – the highest number in the 51 years that records have been kept.^v
- The percentage of the American population receiving supplemental nutrition assistance is 10.3%. In 2009, 14% of Jefferson County residents (91,190 people) received supplemental nutrition assistance.^{vi}
- Jefferson County's median income is \$46,269, below the national average and the poverty rate is high with more than 15% of residents living in poverty. Low income and poverty are obesity risk factors.^{vii}
- Reducing the cost of fresh fruits and vegetables often increases fruit and vegetable consumption in low income households.^{viii}

Food Deserts and Food Imbalance:

- In Birmingham, more than 88,000 people, 23,000 of which are children, live in areas where mainstream grocers are distant (food deserts) and unhealthy food is readily available (food imbalance). Those living in food deserts and food imbalance conditions in Birmingham find it difficult to purchase healthy food regularly.^{ix}
- The lack of access to fresh, healthy foods is related to preventable diseases, shortened lives and poor quality of life of those living in food deserts.
- Public markets and well-targeted financial and technical assistance can create viable solutions that provide healthier food options, create job opportunities and ultimately revitalize distressed communities.

School Systems

- Sufficient fruit and vegetable consumption among Alabama youth is 16.3% compared to the 22.3% national average.^x
- More than 50% of students in Jefferson County receive free or reduced lunch – many of whom depend on the school system to provide 2 of their meals each day.^{xi}
- The Farm to School grant program, authorized by the 2004 Child Nutrition Act and WIC Reauthorization Act, has found:
 - The choice of healthier options in the cafeteria through Farm to School meals results in consumption of more fruits and vegetables.
 - Farm to School programs can help improve children's health and help alleviate current diet-related childhood health problems such as obesity and Type 2 Diabetes.
 - Local produce can actually cost less than highly processed versions currently delivered to schools.
 - For every dollar spent on local foods in schools, one to three dollars circulate in the local economy, creating more jobs.^{xii}
- Students with an increased fruit and vegetable intake and lower caloric intake of fat perform better in school.^{xiii}

- Garden-based nutrition intervention programs may have the potential to promote increased fruit and vegetable intake and increased willingness to taste fruits and vegetables among youth.^{xiv}
- Nutrition education programs can significantly improve consumption of healthful food, teaching people how to plan and prepare healthier options.^{xv}

Agricultural & Community Land Use

- Uncontrolled land development reduces the amount of farm land available, limiting the availability of fresh, local and affordable food.
- Land use and community design decisions can create food deserts resulting from limited access to grocery stores, farmers markets, produce stands and community gardens.^{xvi}
- Jefferson County has invaluable opportunities for long and prosperous agricultural seasons. By supporting community gardens and urban farms through education and policy, the community can beautify vacant lots, revitalize industrial areas and community members can engage in physical activity while growing their own food.^{xvii}

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