

News Release



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California FreshWorks Fund

First Lady Michelle Obama Announces California's \$200 Million Public-Private Loan Fund to Promote Healthy Food Access

Los Angeles, CA—Community Health Councils (CHC) is a founding partner in the California FreshWorks Fund announced by First Lady Michelle Obama in a White House event Wednesday. The partnership with The California Endowment, California Grocers Association, CRA/LA, Kaiser Permanente and many others is part of CHC's continuing commitment that began more than a decade ago to bring greater access and healthier foods to low-income, underserved communities. In 2009, CHC brought together industry, residents and community organizations to examine the barriers to grocery store development and access to high-quality, fresh fruits and vegetables in our communities. After two years of careful collaboration, the California Freshworks Fund has been launched to tackle the problem directly by encouraging the construction of new grocery store, farmers' markets and other fresh food retailers in underserved communities.

California FreshWorks is a private-public partnership loan fund that has raised \$200 million to encourage economic development and inspire innovation in healthy food retailing across the state. The fund will be used to finance grocery stores and other forms of healthy food retail development including farmers' markets, farm-to-table programs, and mobile trucks in underserved areas.

"Ready access to healthy food is taken for granted in most neighborhoods, but that is not the case in food deserts such as South Los Angeles, where many residents must travel outside the community to find fresh and nutritious food," says Lark Galloway Gilliam, CHC's executive director. "The California FreshWorks Fund will help reduce barriers to the high price of entry into food deserts through a combination of loans and grants to grocers and distributors. "

As in many inner-city communities where lower-income and racial or ethnic minority individuals reside, South LA has suffered from a dearth of private investment and the inequitable distribution of public resources. Home to over 1.3 million people, the area's 60 full-service grocery stores average 22,156 residents. In West LA, 57 stores average only 11,150 residents. South LA residents are forced to travel to buy the food they need and spend a significant amount of the almost \$1.2 billion spent on food for the home outside of their community.

Areas like South LA possess untapped market potential and yet the economic opportunity and benefit to the community is diverted elsewhere, creating a "food desert" and significant barriers to healthful eating that are too high for many individuals and families to overcome. Transforming the food desert to a food oasis requires a comprehensive long-term strategy to improve healthy living and spur commercial revitalization such as the California FreshWorks Fund provides.

"The lack of full-service grocery stores carrying fresh, quality healthy food has fueled the high rates of death and disability due to diet-related diseases like heart disease and diabetes in communities like South Los Angeles. The California Freshworks Fund will help to breakdown stigma, misperceptions and bureaucratic obstacles and brings quality stores back into our communities," continues Galloway-Gilliam.

For more information on the California FreshWorks Fund, visit the website at www.cafreshworks.com. For more information on Community Health Councils and to read our report *Food Desert to Food Oasis*, visit our website at www.chc-inc.org.

Community Health Councils is a non-profit, community-based health promotion, advocacy and policy organization. Established in 1992, CHC's mission is to improve health and increase access to quality healthcare for uninsured, economically-disadvantaged, and underserved populations.