The House voted 67-49 Thursday to budget for a new program to put fresh produce in convenience stores.

The Healthy Food Small Retailer Fund would spend $1 million to put refrigerators full of fruits and vegetables in 6,000 convenience stores located in “food deserts” that don’t have easy access to grocery stores.

“Getting nutrient-rich foods to these people is critical in many communities – to be able to buy more than a honey bun and a Coke,” said the budget amendment’s sponsor, Rep. Yvonne Holley of Raleigh. “We have people in a city that have access to all the junk food in the world, and they can’t get nutrient-rich food.”

The program would use local farmers to supply produce to the stores. Funding for the program is contingent on a separate House bill becoming law; that bill hasn’t moved yet in the House or Senate.

The proposal drew criticism from several Republicans who said it would interfere in the free market. Rep. Michael Speciale, a New Bern Republican, said he doesn’t think the produce would sell and called it a “crazy idea.”

“If I go to the corner store, I want a honey bun and a Coke,” Speciale said. “Have you been to these corner stores that have the fruits? I wouldn’t eat them if you paid me – they’ve been sitting there for awhile.”

While one legislator described a similar program that’s had success in the Greenville area, Speciale said he’s been there and “seen the worst bananas and the worst fruits.”