STATE BUDGET INCLUDES FUNDING FOR HEALTHY CORNER STORE INITIATIVE

First Time State Has Invested in Program to Bring Healthy Food to NC Food Deserts

A Statement by Morgan Wittman Gramann, Managing Director

“We are grateful that the General Assembly has included funding for the Healthy Corner Store Initiative in this year’s budget (Section 13.4(a)). This is a great first step in setting up a program that will bring healthy food into food deserts across North Carolina and is the first time that state funds have been invested in a program of this kind. We look forward to working with the General Assembly next year to fully fund this important initiative. The program will be housed in the Department of Agriculture and we look forward to working with them to create a program that will not only improve the health of the people in our state, but connect our small farmers with local retail outlets so they can sell the products that they grow.

We were also pleased to see that the budget included a provision (Section 15.1(d)) to set up a study committee to look at the issue of whether funds from federal Community Development Block Grants may be used to support the Healthy Corner Store Initiative in future years. We have long contended that the Initiative is not just about the physical health of North Carolinians, but is also about the economic well-being of our state. Communities cannot survive and grow if they do not have access to affordable, healthy food and we feel that CDBG funds are an appropriate resource for this program. We are excited to work with members of the General Assembly and other state agencies to address this question.”

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BACKGROUND:

North Carolina has over 349 food deserts across 80 counties, impacting 1.5 million North Carolina residents. Limited food access and insecurity adversely impact diet and health and is one of the causes of the state’s high rate of obesity. Access to fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy products, seafood and other lean proteins is limited in food deserts. The Healthy Corner Store Initiative would assess communities for access to healthy foods, engage interested small retail store owners to offer healthier options, and provide participating retailers with marketing and technical assistance (signage, cooking demonstrations, etc.) to help them promote the healthy foods they sell. The Initiative would work to connect these store owners with North Carolina farmers, benefiting local farmers by expanding their market opportunities. The Initiative coordinates with SNAP and WIC to ensure underserved communities can maximize their utilization of these programs in the healthy corner store locations.
About NC Alliance for Health:

The North Carolina Alliance for Health is an independent, statewide coalition of public, private, professional and nonprofit organizations advocating for obesity and tobacco use prevention policies before North Carolina's legislative and executive branches. Alliance members and partners include the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association, the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, American Lung Association, NC Pediatric Society, Prevention Partners, NC Association of Local Health Directors, NC Public Health Association, March of Dimes, American Diabetes Association, Youth Empowered Solutions, NC Alliance of YMCAs, and many others. For more information, visit http://www.ncallianceforhealth.org/.