2014 Obesity Prevention Policy Priority: 
Creation of a Healthy Small Food Retailer Initiative

Goal:
Promote the elimination of food deserts in North Carolina through the creation of a state level Healthy Small Food Retailer Initiative that would lead to an increase in the amount of healthy food being offered in existing corner stores in low and moderate income communities.

What is a Healthy Small Food Retailer Initiative?
A Healthy Small Food Retailer Initiative is a program that would assess communities for access to healthy foods, engage interested small retail store owners to offer healthier options, and then provide participating retailers with marketing and technical assistance (signage, cooking demonstrations, etc) to help them promote the healthy foods they sell. The program coordinates with SNAP and WIC to ensure underserved communities can maximize their utilization of these programs in the healthy corner store locations.

A North Carolina Healthy Small Food Retailer Initiative would include the following components:

- The establishment of a Healthy Small Food Retailer Fund to provide funding for county-based programs to provide assistance to existing corner stores to increase the availability and sales of fresh and nutritious food in low or moderate income areas.

- Through the fund, mini-grants and/or loans would be provided to local health department or non-profit(s) to aid existing corner store owners in acquiring refrigerators, displays or other one-time capital expenditures necessary for stocking health foods and fresh produce.

- To maximize community support for purchasing the healthier fresh food, Healthy Small Food Retailer Grantees would be provided technical assistance, education, advice or other assistance regarding food safety and handling, business operations, as well as marketing and promotion (including materials and supplies for nutrition education and healthy food promotion).

- The Healthy Small Food Retailer Fund could be administered by the NC Division of Public Health, in collaboration with NC Cooperative Extension, the NC Department of Agriculture, the NC Department of Commerce, local health departments and non-profit organizations with demonstrated expertise in access to healthy food. The administering agency will set and enforce the goals and standards required by the competitive grant or loan process. It is recommended that at least 10 percent of the Fund be reserved for the administrative Department’s administrative and operational costs to allocate the funding and prepare the evaluation, unless those costs are provided for from other budgets or in-kind resources.

- An evaluation component would be included in the initiative to measure the health and economic impact of the Healthy Small Food Retailer Initiative.

For more information, go to www.ncallianceforhealth.org or contact Pam Seamans at pam@ncallianceforhealth.org/ 919-949-5992.

The North Carolina Alliance for Health is a project of the North Carolina Pediatric Society.