



North Carolina Alliance for Health

Sample Letters to the Editor

Healthy Corner Store Initiative

Dear Editor:

There are 349 food deserts in North Carolina. That is, one in five North Carolinians must travel outside of their community to purchase healthy foods. It is urgent that the North Carolina General Assembly direct funding to address this public health crisis.

Studies have shown, and common sense dictates, that the foods to which people have access are determinative of the foods they choose to eat. By making healthy foods more available, we have the opportunity to enable a wider population to prepare and consume healthier meals, thereby decreasing the number of illnesses related to the maintenance of a poor diet, including heart disease and some cancers.

The Healthy Corner Store Initiative is a critical program that will encourage the elimination of food deserts in North Carolina by promoting the sale of healthy foods in corner stores, thus increasing access to healthy foods in communities across the state. The initiative is resolved to creating infrastructure for selling healthy foods, such as fitting corner stores with refrigeration systems and display cases for fresh produce.

Because access to healthy foods, public health, and decreased healthcare costs are imperative to the health of our state, it is essential that the North Carolina General Assembly appropriate \$1 million to fund The Healthy Corner Store Initiative.

Tobacco Use Prevention Funding

Dear Editor:

Until 2010, the Health and Wellness Trust Fund was receiving just over \$17 million a year for tobacco use prevention and cessation programs. Tobacco use among high school students steadily declined throughout the early 2000s, from 38.3% in 2000 to 25.8% in 2009. However, in 2011, the North Carolina General Assembly cut all state funding for tobacco use prevention programming. Almost immediately, teen tobacco use in North Carolina began to quickly rise again, increasing almost 4% between 2011 and 2013.

North Carolina is moving backwards. Tobacco use continues to be the number one cause of preventable death in our state. It is imperative for our youth to be educated on the dangers of tobacco use. The prevention programs that were so effectively curbing teen tobacco use in North Carolina must be restored.

Funding should again be provided by the tobacco industry via the Tobacco MSA. By allocating just 12.8% of the MSA funds each year (\$17.3 million), we can once again provide an effective education program to youth that counters the tobacco industry's predatory marketing practices. Without these programs, however, taxpayers will bear the burden of the \$3.81 billion in direct medical costs related to smoking each year and an additional \$7.2 billion in future healthcare costs associated with tobacco use.

Every North Carolinian must urge the General Assembly to once again appropriate Tobacco MSA funds for tobacco use prevention programs to save billions of dollars and thousands of lives.