

# New Jersey Healthy Corner Store Initiative

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**June 18, 2015**

**CONTACT:**

**Libby Vinson, 609-577-1993**

**Association Business Solutions, Inc.**

**libby@absnj.com**

## **American Heart Association | American Stroke Association, The Food Trust and NJ YMCA State Alliance Encourage NJ Policymakers to Make Healthy Food Accessible for ALL in the Garden State!**

*Volunteers and staff gather at NJ State House to publicly thank sponsors of the A-4505/S-3043— Healthy Small Food Retailer Act—that would create a Statewide Healthy Corner Store Initiative.*

**Trenton, NJ**— Volunteers and staff from the American Heart Association | American Stroke Association, The Food Trust and the NJ YMCA State Alliance gathered at the NJ State House today to recognize the legislative sponsors of the ‘Healthy Small Food Retailer Act’ and encourage policymakers to take swift action on the bill. The legislation, A4505 (Wimberly; Sumter; Diegnan; Garcia; Fuentes; Benson)/S-3043 (Rice, Cruz-Perez, Vitale), would set aside \$1million in state funds to increase the availability and sale of healthy, affordable food in local corner stores and bodegas in New Jersey communities that are underserved by supermarkets.

The NJ Small Food Retailer Act is modeled after the New Jersey Healthy Corner Store Initiative—a partnership of The Food Trust, New Jersey Partnership for Healthy Kids and American Heart Association | American Stroke Association—that is successfully up-and-running in several pilot cities with local partners providing education, training and other support small retailers need to profitably stock, market and sell healthy, affordable and culturally appropriate food.

In just three years, this small, localized public health and economic development strategy is yielding impressive results in increasing people’s access to affordable, healthy food in five pilot cities. It is also bolstering economic development efforts by generating local jobs and capturing retail dollars that would otherwise be spent outside of the community. A-4505/S-3043 would enable the expansion of the impactful local innovations to additional New Jersey communities that lack access to affordable, fresh foods.

“Far too many New Jerseyans live in communities where they are unable to make healthy food choices because there are no well-stocked grocery or convenience stores in their neighborhoods,” said Corinne Orlando, director of Government Relations for American Heart Association | American Stroke Association. “By tapping into a community’s existing retail footprint, the New Jersey Corner Store Initiative is removing barriers to food access, enabling more people to make the healthy choice, the easy choice. The American Heart Association applauds the leadership of the sponsors of the

‘Healthy Small Food Retailer Act’ for their commitment to ensuring ALL residents of the Garden State have access to the healthy foods they need to nutritiously feed their families.”

The U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates that 340,000 New Jersey residents are living in food deserts across the state, while The Reinvestment Fund suggests even more alarming numbers with as much as 10% of the state’s population lacking access to healthy food options. In 2013, New Jersey was one of six states that saw a slight increase in adult obesity, and the state’s rate of obesity among toddlers who reside in low-income communities is the second highest in the nation. <sup>1</sup>

“Disparity in food access is having a profound impact on the wellbeing of New Jersey families living in underserved communities. Studies indicate the incidence of obesity and diet-related disease is higher in neighborhoods where residents lack access to stores that sell nutritious foods,” said Darrin Anderson, Deputy Director of the NJ YMCA State Alliance. “These areas are also cut off from the economic benefits that accompany the anchor stores: steady jobs, increased property values, a solid tax base, and the additional retail development that often follows. The Healthy Small Food Retailer Act will help reinvest in these communities and bring the fundamental health and economic benefits to all citizens of the Garden State.”

To qualify as a designated “Healthy Corner Store” the small food retailers agree to display marketing materials created by The Food Trust— including recipe cards — to indicate healthy food options; introduce at least four new healthy food products from two different food groups; and agree to periodic progress-assessment visits. In return, the stores are eligible for training and technical assistance that enable them to profitably stock and sell the new, healthy food items, as well as advertising, marketing, and promotional materials to attract new customers and bolster profits.

“Everyone deserves to have healthy food choices available in their community. We know from over 10 years of corner store that began in Philadelphia that small food retailers—often thought of as a source of unhealthy foods—can be key partners in the effort to improve access to healthy, affordable foods. When healthier food options are available, consumers will purchase them, leading to better health outcomes,” said John Weidman, Deputy Executive Director of The Food Trust. “With an estimated 5,600 corner stores existing in New Jersey, these venues are a critical component in addressing healthy food access in the Garden State. The time for a statewide scale-up of the program could not be better and I thank the sponsors of the ‘Healthy Small Food Retailer Act’ for recognizing that a public investment will create jobs and improve health.”

---

<sup>1</sup> Levi J, S. L. (2014). *The State of Obesity: Better Policies for a Healthier America*. Trust for America's Health

## About the American Heart Association | American Stroke Association

The American Heart Association is the nation's oldest, largest voluntary organization devoted to fighting cardiovascular diseases and stroke.

Founded by six cardiologists in 1924, the organization now includes more than 22.5 million volunteers and supporters working tirelessly to eliminate these diseases. The American Heart Association funds innovative research, fights for stronger public health policies and provides lifesaving tools and information to save and improve lives.

The American Heart Association is the nation's leader in CPR education training. We help people understand the importance of healthy lifestyle choices. We provide science-based treatment guidelines to healthcare professionals to help ensure the best treatment for every patient, every time. We educate lawmakers, policy makers and the public as we advocate for changes to protect and improve the health of our communities.

## About The Food Trust

For more than 20 years, The Food Trust has been working to ensure that everyone has access to affordable, nutritious food and information to make healthy decisions. The Food Trust's comprehensive approach includes improving food environments and teaching nutrition education in schools; working with corner store owners to increase healthy offerings and helping customers make healthier choices; managing farmers' markets in communities that lack access to affordable produce; and encouraging grocery store development in underserved communities. Learn more about The Food Trust at [www.thefoodtrust.org](http://www.thefoodtrust.org).

## About the New Jersey YMCA State Alliance

Incorporated as a 501 (c) (3) not-for-profit corporation, the New Jersey YMCA State Alliance is comprised of 41 corporate YMCA associations and 79 branches from across the garden state. Together, New Jersey YMCAs work together to strengthen the foundations of community to better serve the people of New Jersey. To that end, the New Jersey YMCA State Alliance: Monitors critical public policy issues and advocates for member Ys; fosters statewide communication among YMCAs and collaborating nonprofit partners; coordinates statewide initiatives aligned with three focus areas: youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility. For more information, visit [www.njymca.org](http://www.njymca.org)

## About The New Jersey Healthy Corner Store Initiative

The New Jersey Healthy Corner Store Initiative is focused on increasing healthy food access in areas underserved by supermarkets by linking community partners with corner store owners to help the small retailers profitably stock, promote and sell affordable fresh food to their customers. The goal is to expand the scope of the program by replicating its success and bringing best practices to more communities in New Jersey that lack access to affordable, fresh food. The statewide initiative is being led by the American Heart Association, New Jersey Partnership for Healthy Kids and The Food Trust, with support from The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Visit [njhealthycornerstores.heart.org](http://njhealthycornerstores.heart.org) for more information, and follow the New Jersey Healthy Corner Store initiative on Twitter at #njcornerstores.





Two Assembly sponsors of the A-4505 “The Healthy Small Food Retailer Act” legislation and NJ Healthy Corner Store Initiative partner representatives during a press conference June 18 at the State House. L-R: Corinne Orlando, Director, Govt Affairs, American Heart Association | American Stroke Association; John Weidman, Deputy Executive Director, The Food Trust; Asm Benjie Wimberly; Darrin Andersen, Deputy Director of the NJ YMCA State Alliance; Asm Patrick Diegnan