POLICY BRIEF

Healthy Food Purchasing

Everyone deserves the opportunity to live a healthy, full life — but not everyone in our country has an equal opportunity to achieve this. CityHealth, an initiative of the de Beaumont Foundation and Kaiser Permanente, promotes a package of tried and tested policies that ensure all people in our largest cities have access to healthy choices.

Together, with visionary city leaders, we can make sure that all people have access to a safe place to live, a healthy body and mind, and a thriving environment. Policy solutions like Healthy Food Purchasing can help make communities safer and resolve critical health disparities — now and decades down the road.

cityhealth

AN INITIATIVE OF

the de Beaumont Foundation + Kaiser Permanente

When cities have healthy food available on public property, we all have more opportunity to choose what's best for our bodies. Cities that prioritize health in their food purchases make sure everyone has access to healthy choices in public places where we work, play, and learn — from municipal offices to public gyms to daycare facilities. It can also help cities save millions of dollars in preventable health care costs.

THE HEALTHY FOOD CHALLENGE

- Millions of Americans struggle to eat healthfully, putting themselves at higher risk for unhealthy weight gain and diet-related diseases that diminish quality of life and drive-up health care costs.
- A healthy diet is out of reach for many of us, and access to healthy foods within cities varies widely. Latino neighborhoods have one-third the supermarkets as other neighborhoods, and studies have shown that Black neighborhoods also have limited access to grocery stores.
- Cities hold significant purchasing power that could be better leveraged to support healthy eating. Public facilities (including worksites, parks, and hospitals) often make food available for purchase through cafeterias, concessions, or vending machines. City agencies also purchase and serve food for meetings and events, afterschool programs, senior centers, and correctional facilities.

A HEALTHY SOLUTION: HEALTHY FOOD PURCHASING

- **Leverages Purchasing Power** — City procurement policies are an effective tool to make healthy eating easier because local governments are often among the largest employers and food purchasers in a community and can ensure thousands of people have access to healthy choices every day.
- **Meets Residents Where They Are** — Local procurement can provide healthy choices for residents in a variety of locations — at work in government offices, at play in parks and recreational centers, and within local settings, such as schools and daycare facilities.
- **Provides Residents a Choice** — When people have the opportunity to choose what's best for their bodies, most do. In Chicago, when healthy food options were introduced to vending machines in city parks, the machines' daily sales increased from $84 to $371.

Going For Gold

CityHealth annually rates Healthy Food Purchasing policies in cities with criteria that set the "gold standard" in each policy area. These criteria were developed with input from national experts, are backed by evidence, and work to reduce or remove systemic barriers to health equity. Medals are awarded to cities that meet the elements necessary for the best quality policy (gold), a good quality policy (silver), and a passable quality policy (bronze). Cities with no policy, or that don't meet the minimum threshold for a bronze medal, receive no medal.

HEALTHY FOOD PURCHASING MEDAL CRITERIA	Bronze	Silver	Gold
1. City has a procurement policy mandating nutrition standards.	✓	✓	✓
2. City procurement policy applies to one or more venues where food is sold or served on city property or by a city agency or city contractor. The policy may apply only to vending machines.	✓	✓	✓
3. City has a procurement policy mandating nutrition standards at least as strong as the Foodservice Guidelines for Federal Facilities.	✗	✓	✓
City procurement policy applies to EITHER • All venues where food is sold on city property OR • All venues where food is purchased with city funds and/or served by city agencies, contractors, or subcontractors.	✗	✓	✓
4. City has a procurement policy mandating nutrition standards at least as strong as the Foodservice Guidelines for Federal Facilities (innovative level).	✗	✗	✓
5. City procurement policy applies to all venues where food is sold or served on city property or by city agencies, contractors, or subcontractors, or purchased with city funds.	✗	✗	✓

NOTE: Permissible exemptions:

1. Prior dated contracts
2. Contracts under a certain threshold amount ($10,000)
3. Airports
4. Public concessions providing food for sale through leases

PHILADELPHIA LEADS IN HEALTHY FOOD PURCHASING

Philadelphia has adopted a framework that allows the city's procurement office to prioritize high quality, nutritious food even if that means spending a little more on local contracts. The city is attempting to purchase meals and snacks that help support local, minority and women owned businesses that will ultimately increase residents' access to safe, healthful food.