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[Home](#) > [Blogs](#) > [megan's blog](#) > Better Foods Coming to a State Agency Near You

Better Foods Coming to a State Agency Near You

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By Assemblymember Holly Mitchell

As part of First Lady Michelle Obama’s Let’s Move Initiative, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recently unveiled new healthy food service guidelines. The Health and Sustainability Guidelines for Federal Concessions and Vending Operations promotes a healthier workforce by making healthy food options more accessible and affordable.

California can be quick to capitalize on this exciting opportunity, with legislation to help lead the effort in creating healthier environments by adopting a similar food procurement strategy for the state’s cafeterias, office buildings, and vending machines.

I have introduced AB727, sponsored by California Pan-Ethnic Health Network (CPEHN), to ensure that our state dollars are invested in the health of Californians, and have chosen this bill to be among the first I carry as a newly elected member of the Legislature. AB727 would require that healthy and sustainable foods be made available for purchase in vending machines, concessions, and cafeterias in state buildings, and encourages the sale of locally grown food products. Eventually this will lower the state’s health care costs, increase investment in California’s agricultural economy, and promote local farming that minimizes harm to the environment.

Obesity levels in California are staggering. According to the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, more than six million California adults (23 percent) are obese and an additional 9.3 million (34 percent) are overweight. In 2006, obesity, excess weight, and physical inactivity cost the state upwards of \$41 billion in health care costs and lost productivity, nearly double the amount reported in 2000.

Given California’s vibrant agricultural economy, we should support our vendors by promoting consumption of sustainable, healthy, local edibles. Policymaking that encourages prevention of obesity and diabetes saves future medical expense while contributing to a culture of good health. The new national model for a stronger, healthier future is one California should be among the first to embrace.”



Assemblymember Mitchell represents California's 47th District.