



**Testimony of Adriana Espinoza
NYC Program Director
New York League of Conservation Voters
City Council Committee on Finance
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Good afternoon. My name is Adriana Espinoza and I am Director of the New York City Program at the New York League of Conservation Voters (NYLCV). NYLCV represents over 31,000 members in New York City and we are committed to advancing a sustainability agenda that will make our people, our neighborhoods, and our economy healthier and more resilient. NYLCV would like to thank Chair Dromm and members of the Finance Committee for the opportunity to testify on budget priorities that we believe will advance New York City's sustainability agenda.

NYLCV supports a thriving and sustainable local foodshed and efforts to ensure every New Yorker has access to fresh, healthy, local food. In the FY19 budget, the City should support programs that incentivize both the sale and purchase of healthy food. NYLCV suggests focus on the following areas:

Food Financing Initiative

New York State has had success in expanding the sale of healthy food through the Healthy Food, Healthy Communities Fund, an initiative that garnered private investment and provided loans and grants for the establishment of neighborhood grocery stores in underserved communities. The program resulted in 20 new food markets across the state, and 441 permanent employees, but is no longer being funded in the State's budget.

We believe the City should implement a similar healthy food financing initiative with a \$10 million investment in the budget to expand food retail establishments in neighborhoods with insufficient access to fresh produce. An investment of this size on the state level leveraged over \$150 million in investments, and we believe that success could be replicated in New York City.

Snap Incentive Programs and Healthy Corner Store Initiatives

Addressing affordability is a pivotal component to expanding access to healthy food. With 1 in 5 New Yorkers enrolled in SNAP, the City should continue to explore ways these benefits can be used to promote the purchase of fruits and vegetables while also reducing food insecurity. SNAP programs in the form of coupons or point of sale discounts have demonstrated success in incentivizing the purchase of healthy foods. **NYLCV supports an investment of \$15 million to expand SNAP incentive programs to serve more New Yorkers.**

To date, the Health Bucks program has led to the purchase of more than \$2 million in fresh produce, a figure we believe could grow exponentially if such programs were expanded beyond farmers markets to places closer to where families shop.

To that end, NYLCV supports Healthy Corner Store Initiatives, including Shop Healthy NYC and other programs led by local community-based organizations. These programs educate New Yorkers about the availability of healthy options through public engagement and provide incentives to bodega owners to follow through on commitments to provide healthier foods. **In FY19, the Council and Administration should support healthy corner store initiatives with an additional \$3 million to increase the amount of healthy food offered in corner stores in low- and moderate- income neighborhoods around the City.**

I would like to thank Chair Dromm and the entire Committee on Finance for your leadership, and I look forward to working with you all on advancing a healthy New York and healthy New Yorkers.