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**California to Promote Healthy Food, Local Vendors  
with Procurement Policies**

*Proposed Bill Would Require State to Use Purchasing Power to  
Buy Healthier and Sustainable Foods*

**OAKLAND** – As part of the First Lady’s Let’s Move Initiative, the US Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) unveiled their new healthy food service guidelines, which they will begin implementing within their departments. The Health and Sustainability Guidelines for Federal Concessions and Vending Operations promotes a healthier workforce by making healthy food options more accessible and affordable.

With this national model in place, California plans to help lead the effort in creating healthier environments by adopting a similar food procurement strategy for its cafeterias, office buildings, and vending machines. **AB 727 introduced in the 2011-12 legislative session by Assemblymember Holly Mitchell** would require the state’s Department of General Services to use its purchasing power to buy and provide healthy and sustainable foods that mirror the DHHS standards released today. When fully implemented, this would result in lower health care costs for the state, increased investment in California’s agriculture economy, and promote local farming systems that minimize harm to the environment.

“It’s time to ensure that our state dollars are invested in the health of our residents,” Mitchell said. “Given our vibrant agricultural economy, we should have policies that encourage healthy eating, promote sustainability, and support local vendors. By preventing health conditions like obesity and diabetes, we can create a culture of good health and stave off future medical costs.”

With the rise of obesity in California, providing healthier food options has become an important strategy for improving public health and reducing state health care costs. 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,

overweight, and physical inactivity cost the state upwards of \$41 billion in health care costs and lost productivity, nearly double the amount reported in 2000.<sup>1</sup>

“Overweight and obesity have reached staggering levels in California’s communities of color,” said Ellen Wu, Executive Director of the California Pan-Ethnic Health Network, a sponsor of the legislation. “Over 65 percent of African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans in California qualify as either overweight or obese, far higher than any other ethnic groups. With this bill, the state can lead the way on a strategy that will increase access to healthy food and reduce these disparities.”

“In addition to offering fresh, high quality food, they also provide a broad array of choices including: organic, vegan, gluten-free and more. These new guidelines are an important step for HHS and GSA to support the Administration’s over-all goal to improve the health and wellness of all Americans and we look forward to making that goal a reality,” said Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius and General Services Administration Administrator Martha Johnson in a post on the official White House “Let’s Move” website.

Several California counties have already implemented local food procurement policies to promote healthy food options. Los Angeles County for example, now requires that 100% of food sold in vending machines on government property to meet the State of California’s Nutrition Guidelines. The County also just approved a resolution requiring that the bid process for dietary services contracts in all County-operated hospitals and clinics consider healthy nutrition options.

"We understand that providing healthier food options could have a large health impact." says Dr. Jonathan Fielding, Director of the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. "We all need to create environments and model policies that promote health."

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The [California Pan-Ethnic Health Network \(CPEHN\)](#) works to eliminate health disparities by advocating for public policies and sufficient resources to address the health needs of communities of color.

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<sup>1</sup> California Center for Health Policy Research, *The Economic Costs of Overweight, Obesity and Physical Inactivity Among California Adults – 2006*, July 2009. <http://www.publichealthadvocacy.org/costofobesity.html>