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3 Title: Fresh Produce Access and Intake in Food Deserts  
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5 Introduced by: John Winterholler for the Medical Student Section  
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9 Referred to: Reference Committee D  
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11 House Action: **APPROVE**  
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13  
14 Whereas, a food desert is defined by the US Department of Agriculture as a low-income census  
15 tract where a significant number or share of residents have low access to a full-service supermarket or  
16 grocery store, where low access is defined as residing more than one mile from a full-service grocery  
17 store in urban areas and more than 10 miles from a full-service grocery store in rural areas<sup>1,2</sup>, and  
18

19 Whereas, over 29.7 million Americans reside in food deserts, live at or below 200 percent of  
20 the Federal Poverty Level, and have limited access to transportation<sup>2</sup>, and  
21

22 Whereas, food diversity and accessibility significantly impact individual and community  
23 health<sup>2</sup>, and  
24

25 Whereas, convenience stores and fast food restaurants are often the only food provision  
26 options available and accessible to persons residing in food deserts<sup>3</sup>, and  
27

28 Whereas, attempts by residents living in food deserts to take charge of their own dietary  
29 intake are often impeded by barriers including lack of knowledge regarding healthy food choices,  
30 absence of suitable ingredients, time constraints, and exhaustion after work<sup>4</sup>, and  
31

32 Whereas, the inability to access healthy foods increases incidence of chronic disease,  
33 congenital defects, and developmental delays, impedes proper longitudinal management of chronic  
34 disease, and contributes to increased Emergency Department visits which in turn pose substantial  
35 economic burdens on the healthcare system and the patient<sup>5,6,7,8,9,10,11</sup>, and  
36

37 Whereas, absence of accessible healthy food choices in food deserts can impede both health  
38 care provider-initiated nutrition education and community education on healthy eating habits<sup>12,13</sup>, and  
39

40 Whereas, government-funded programs purposed to encourage grocery store development  
41 in food deserts do increase the total amount food available but healthier options such as fresh  
42 produce can remain prohibitively expensive, thus reducing the impact on the continued rise in  
43 obesity, adverse health outcomes, and healthcare costs<sup>6,7,8,14,15,16,17</sup>, and  
44

45 Whereas, while programs including the Double Dollar and the Double Up Food Bucks Program  
46 incentivize visits to Farmers’ Markets and community gardens to purchase fresh produce, limitations  
47 posed by their operation times and locations often diminish consumer accessibility<sup>2,18,19</sup>, and  
48

49 Whereas, logistical difficulties such as proximity to bus stops, neighborhood centers, or areas  
50 of high population density can potentially leave food desert residents hungry and thousands of food  
51 assistance program dollars unused<sup>20</sup>, and  
52

53 Whereas, mobile produce wholesalers, including curbside venues and direct marketing  
54 farmers, have the capacity to provide fresh produce directly to residents living in food deserts within

55 the communities in which they reside at more accessible prices and overall have been associated with  
56 increased fruit and vegetable intake in food desert areas<sup>16,21,22,23,24,25</sup>, and

57

58 Whereas, mobile markets bring food diversity into food desert neighborhoods and contribute  
59 to greater consumer perception of healthy food options<sup>17,26</sup>, and

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61 Whereas, overcoming hurdles posed by municipal codes, licensing regulations, and  
62 technological requirements for mobile redemption of federal food program benefits can significantly  
63 increase prevalence and duration of mobile produce vendor operations<sup>20,21,22,23,24,27</sup>, and

64

65 Whereas, mobile produce vendors are ideally situated to surgically insert themselves deep  
66 within food desert communities to sustainably provide for a long-standing need, develop key  
67 relationships of trust with consumers and understand their needs, and contribute to improved health  
68 and well-being of the communities they serve<sup>17,26,28</sup>; therefore be it

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70 RESOLVED: That MSMS advocate for continued efforts to further increase access to fresh  
71 produce and food education programs within food desert communities (as defined by the US  
72 Department of Agriculture); and be it further

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74 RESOLVED: That MSMS advocate for programs and policies that incentivize mobile produce  
75 market operations within food deserts (as defined by the US Department of Agriculture) and enable  
76 consumers to redeem food assistance benefits with such vendors; and be it further

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78 RESOLVED: That MSMS advocate for the continuation of programs that incentivize the  
79 purchasing and consumption of fresh produce such as the Double Dollar and the Double Up Food  
80 Bucks Program; and be it further

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82 RESOLVED: That MSMS advocate for the creation of translatable, streamlined procedures for  
83 obtaining licenses and municipal approvals to operate a mobile produce market business in a food  
84 desert (as defined by the US Department of Agriculture).

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87 WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE FISCAL NOTE: NONE

## RELEVANT MSMS POLICY:

### Enhancing Public Safety Relation to the Food Industry

MSMS supports, where appropriate, Michigan-based community health initiatives or educational programs that promote public awareness of food safety and the source of food products available to consumers. (Res36-10A)

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\* Co-authored in collaboration with the following out-of-state medical students: Ian Brastauskas, University of South Carolina School of Medicine; Lauren Edgar, Wake Forest University School of Medicine; Aliya Khan, University of Arizona College of Medicine-Phoenix; and, Mark Kastner, Florida State University College of Medicine.

<sup>1</sup> Food H, Initiative F, Group W, Markets N, Credit T. Definition of a Food Desert Definitions of Indicators Mapped to Food Deserts.

[http://www.ers.usda.gov/dataFiles/Food\\_Access\\_Research\\_Atlas/Download\\_the\\_Data/Archived\\_Version/archived\\_documentation.pdf](http://www.ers.usda.gov/dataFiles/Food_Access_Research_Atlas/Download_the_Data/Archived_Version/archived_documentation.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Ploeg M Ver, Breneman V, Farrigan T, et al. Access to Affordable and Nutritious Food: Measuring and Understanding Food Deserts and Their Consequences. 2009;(June). [http://www.ers.usda.gov/media/242675/ap036\\_1\\_.pdf](http://www.ers.usda.gov/media/242675/ap036_1_.pdf).

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