



# MAYOR REX RICHARDSON

May 15, 2024

The Honorable Susan Rubio  
California State Senate  
1021 O Street, Suite 8710  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Support for SB 1419 (Rubio)—Food deserts: grants**

Dear Senator Rubio,

On behalf of the City of Long Beach (City), I write in support of SB 1419, which aims to expand access to healthy foods in food deserts by establishing the Food Desert Elimination Grant Program.

People in low-income communities and some racial and ethnic groups often lack access to convenient places that offer affordable, healthier food. According to the [2019 Long Beach Community Health Assessment](#), nearly 20 percent of adults in Long Beach do not have easy access to fresh produce. Communities with high concentrations of fast-food restaurants and convenience stores have been shown to have higher rates of obesity and diabetes, which can lead to other chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, stroke, and arthritis.

SB 1419 would authorize the Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) to collect nonstate, federal, and private funds to support grocery store operators seeking to locate grocery stores in food deserts. Under the Food Desert Elimination Grant Program, CDFA would award grants to support a market and site feasibility study; salaries and benefits to grocery store employees; rents or down payments to acquire a facility located in a food desert; and capital improvements, planning, renovations, land acquisition, demolition, and durable and nondurable equipment purchases.

The City supports policies and legislation that reduce barriers to accessing basic needs, including but not limited to healthy food options. SB 1419 would have a greater impact in Long Beach if the criteria to meet the definition of a “food desert” was reduced to low food access at .5 miles as opposed to one mile. Without public transportation or a vehicle, one mile can be a far distance for many Long Beach residents to access healthy foods, especially if there are no sidewalks, or if a disability prevents someone from traveling that distance. However, SB 1419 is a critical step forward to addressing food insecurity across the state and promoting healthy eating to combat chronic diseases. For these reasons, the City supports SB 1419.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rex Richardson", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mayor Rex Richardson  
City of Long Beach

cc: The Honorable Lena Gonzalez, State Senate, 33<sup>rd</sup> District  
The Honorable Mike Gipson, State Assembly, 65<sup>th</sup> District  
The Honorable Josh Lowenthal, State Assembly, 69<sup>th</sup> District