

## **Board Resolution – In Support of Improving Access to Affordable Healthy Foods**

September 2024

**WHEREAS**, the Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust (TSET) was created by voters in 2000 and has a constitutional mandate to support strategies and programs designed to maintain or improve the health of Oklahomans; and

**WHEREAS**, three behaviors (tobacco use, sedentary lifestyles and poor nutrition) contribute to four conditions (heart disease, lung disease, cancer and diabetes) that cause 58% of all deaths in Oklahoma; and

**WHEREAS**, Oklahoma ranks 47<sup>th</sup> among the states in overall health rankings in the U.S., 45<sup>th</sup> in cardiovascular diseases and 48<sup>th</sup> in obesity rates<sup>1</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, only 51.3% of Oklahomans consume one or more fruits a day and 79.3% consume one or more vegetables a day<sup>2</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, Oklahoma is one of the most food insecure states in the U.S., one of five states that has a food insecurity rate exceeding 14.5% of households<sup>3</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, low-income households are disproportionately affected by discrepancies in access to healthy foods, exacerbating health inequities; and

**WHEREAS**, insufficient access to fresh, healthy foods can lead to poor health outcomes, including higher levels of obesity<sup>4</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, increasing access to healthy foods can reduce healthcare costs, improve health outcomes and enhance the quality of life; and

**WHEREAS**, food access can be enhanced by improving nutrition education, affordability of healthy foods and the physical availability of these foods; and

**WHEREAS**, TSET supports improving access to healthy foods and has several grant programs including the Healthy Living Program, Healthy Incentive Grants, Discovery Grants, and Built Environment Grants that work to improve health, including access to healthy foods.

**BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED**, the TSET Board of Directors supports efforts to:

- Improve access to healthy foods, including a variety of vegetables and fruits, in local communities.
- Support sustainable agriculture to increase the production of healthy foods.
- Facilitate communities in revising zoning laws to establish community gardens, farms and farmers' markets.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/measures/Overall/OK>

<sup>2</sup> 2021 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.hungerfreeok.org/hunger-in-oklahoma/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/health-data/health-factors/health-behaviors/diet-and-exercise/limited-access-to-healthy-foods?year=2024>

- Reduce food insecurity by improving access to healthy, affordable, and culturally appropriate foods in neighborhoods and rural areas with limited options.
- Achieve adequate food security for communities facing barriers.
- Encourage communities to plant community gardens, increase safe access to recreational facilities, and provide nutritional information on menu items and education about how to change unhealthy behaviors.<sup>5</sup>
- Assist schools in providing health education and planting school gardens.
- Educate about the importance of eating healthy foods and how to prepare them on a budget.

**FURTHERMORE, BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED**, the TSET Board of Directors calls on the Oklahoma Legislature to:

- Adequately fund state and local programs that increase access to healthy foods for vulnerable Oklahomans, including school meal, food bank and nutrition assistance programs.
- Encourage urban agriculture to create more community gardens and urban farming initiatives.
- Support local sustainable agriculture to reduce food deserts by increasing the availability of healthy foods and lowering costs due to transportation and benefiting the local economy.

**FURTHERMORE, THE TSET BOARD OF DIRECTORS** also calls upon other interested groups and governing bodies to adopt similar resolutions in support of increasing access to healthy foods.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://shapeyourfutureok.com/overweight-obesitys-impact-oklahoma/health-actions/>