

Realizing the Vision for a Healthy California Opportunities in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009

With passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), California has an important opportunity to leverage federal stimulus dollars for health-promoting infrastructure and programs that will simultaneously:

- Jumpstart the economy through job creation and increased spending
- Promote equitable health and safety outcomes
- Continue to build on the state's commitment to environmental protection and reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

Investments in mass transit, bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, parks and recreation areas, healthy food retail, and regional agricultural networks can make the vision for a healthy California a reality. These impacts can be maximized by directing investments to communities with high rates of chronic disease that stand to benefit most from infrastructure improvements. These investments have the potential to:

- Decrease vehicle miles traveled – conserving fossil fuel, improving air quality, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and decreasing traffic-related injuries
- Improve food and physical activity habits – reducing chronic disease rates and decreasing healthcare expenditures
- Support California's business climate – fostering a healthier, more productive workforce and creating more livable communities

California spends over \$28 billion annually in health care expenditures and lost worker productivity due to chronic illnesses related to poor eating and physical activity habits.¹ A modest 5% decrease in diabetes and cardiovascular disease can yield \$1.7 billion annually in health care savings and additional savings through increased worker productivity and decreased absenteeism.² With the infusion of economic stimulus dollars, we have a unique opportunity to achieve these results by directing funds towards community-based prevention and health-promoting infrastructure.

The Strategic Alliance for Healthy Food and Activity Environments recommends swift actions and investments that will improve health and safety for all Californians.

¹ Sugerman, S.B., Adkins, S.E., et al. (2005). *The Economic Costs of Physical Inactivity, Obesity, and Overweight in California Adults: Health Care, Workers' Compensation, and Lost Productivity*. California Department of Health Services.

² Levy, J., Cohen, L., et al. (2008). *Prevention for a Healthier California: Investments in Disease Prevention Yield Significant Savings, Stronger Communities*. Washington: Trust for America's Health.

SUPPORT HEALTHY COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENTS

- **Prioritize access to healthy food and safe drinking water in high-need communities first.**

Potential ARRA Funding Sources: Community Development Block Grant program (est. \$123 M to CA); Safe Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (est. \$159 M to CA); Rural Business and Industry Loan program (\$3 B nationally)

- **Leverage investments to create and maintain recreation and physical activity opportunities where access is limited.**

Potential ARRA Funding Sources: Community Development Block Grant program; Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program (more than \$56 M to CA); Workforce Investment Act (est. \$74 M for state discretionary purposes); Brownfield Remediation Grants (\$100 M nationally for projects to be awarded by competitive grants)

- **Emphasize health, equity and the environment by supporting walking, biking and public transportation.**

Potential ARRA Funding Sources: Transportation programs (est. \$3.6 B to CA, \$77 M of which must be set aside for transportation enhancements projects to provide improvements in non-automobile-travel infrastructure); Transit Capital Assistance (estimated \$1 B to CA)

- **Make equitable investments in the nutrition and physical activity infrastructure in California schools.**

Potential ARRA Funding Sources: School Modernization funds (est. \$1 B in CA); Subsidized School Construction Bonds (\$22 B nationally); National School Lunch Program equipment assistance (est. \$13 M to CA)

- **Focus workforce funds in communities and sectors that need it most.**

Potential ARRA Funding Sources: Workforce Investment Act (\$494 M to CA)

- **Ensure that all community development, transportation and infrastructure projects adhere to principals and criteria for healthy and equitable land use.**

STRENGTHEN THE PROGRAMS THAT BRING FEDERAL DOLLARS INTO CALIFORNIA TO SUPPORT THE HEALTH AND WELFARE OF HOUSEHOLDS

- **Devote resources to increase effectiveness of nutrition, health and human services for families.**

Potential ARRA Funding Sources: WIC program (\$500 M nationally); Food Stamp Program (est. \$1.4 B to CA); The Emergency Food Assistance Program (est. \$12 M to CA); Medi-Cal (CA eligible to receive \$10.1 B); CalWORKS (est. \$450 M to CA); Supplemental Security Income (est. \$2.2 B to CA)

PRIORITIZE PREVENTION AND WELLNESS FUNDING TO SUPPORT COMMUNITY-BASED INITIATIVES

- **Establish a community prevention and wellness initiative to reduce health inequities and promote healthy communities in California.**

Potential ARRA Funding Sources: Prevention and Wellness Fund (\$650 M nationally) Health Workforce Development and Training (\$500 M nationally)

The Strategic Alliance for Healthy Food and Activity Environments (Strategic Alliance) is a network of diverse advocates in California committed to the vision of healthy community environments. Our network stands ready to work with state leaders to stimulate the economy and advance health and equity in California.

For more information about these recommendations or the Strategic Alliance for Healthy Food and Activity Environments, contact Manal Aboelata, Prevention Institute, at 323-296-5750 or at manal@preventioninstitute.org. You can also visit our website at www.eatbettermovemore.org.