

American Heart Association: Commends Common Council for attempting to lay groundwork to expand healthy food access

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The organization calls for a veto override

MILWAUKEE, Wis. — The American Heart Association commends the Milwaukee Common Council, with leadership from Alderman Khalif Rainey, for supporting the Healthy Food Establishment Fund to assist in building a healthier Milwaukee. Now the organization hopes members will override Mayor Barrett's veto of this important initiative.

"We want to thank Alderman Rainey and the Common Council for investing in strategies to improve access to healthy and affordable foods in Milwaukee," says Thomas Windsor, Milwaukee resident and Board Member for the American Heart Association. "We ask the Council to override the Mayor's veto to ensure this remains a priority for the City."

The 2019 City of Milwaukee budget amendment allotted \$200,000 to create healthy food retail opportunities in neighborhoods throughout Milwaukee that do not have access. These areas, commonly referred to as "food deserts," are filled with fast food restaurants and other unhealthy options. This investment will help create more healthy outlets where residents can purchase food necessary for a nutritious diet. Unfortunately, the Mayor vetoed this appropriation.

"Tremendous progress has been made across the country to improve access to healthy foods, and best practice models exist for Milwaukee to replicate. Now we

just need to ensure funding exists for this vital work,” says Windsor. “While we were disappointed in the Mayor’s veto, we are hopeful the Council will see the value in and need for this investment.”

As part of the MKE Elevate project, the Milwaukee Health Department conducted a survey of over 3,000 Milwaukee residents. Of those surveyed, nearly 40% responded that “access to affordable and healthy food” is the biggest barrier impacting their health. “We all know the importance of eating healthy, but nutritious options are not readily available in all parts of Milwaukee,” says Windsor. “It’s time we change that. Your access to healthy food should not depend on your zip code.”