



On Food Day, PHI Asks Congress to Safeguard Funding for a Healthy, Sustainable Food System and Essential Nutrition Programs

OAKLAND, CA (October 24, 2011)—In recognition of Food Day, the Public Health Institute (PHI) joins with its partners to push for a national commitment to building a healthy, sustainable and equitable food system. Today this commitment carries a special urgency, as crucial food and farm policy decisions get taken up as part of the deficit reduction process.

Food Day, sponsored by the Center for Science in the Public Interest, seeks to bring together people and organizations for a national dialogue about food, farms and the U.S. food system, with a goal of transforming the American diet. The event pushes for U.S. farm policy that supports small and mid-sized farms, sustainable farming practices and just agricultural working conditions. It aims to make fresh, healthy foods accessible and affordable for all.

“This national attention to food and farm policy comes at a critical time,” stated Matthew Marsom, PHI’s director of public policy. “Decisions being made by Congress in the next seven days may threaten vital funding for some of our nation’s most important nutrition and anti-hunger programs. We must urge Congress to reject cuts to programs including WIC [the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children], SNAP [the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as food stamps], and SNAP nutrition education – three programs that work to protect against hunger, promote healthy eating and help to prevent obesity and the burden of chronic disease.”

This week, as part of the Congressional deficit reduction negotiations, leadership of the House and Senate Agriculture Committees will be finalizing their proposals for the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction, otherwise known as the Super Committee. In addition to proposed funding reductions, the committees are proposing to write the 2012 Farm Bill through the Super Committee process.

The Farm Bill is a major agricultural and nutrition bill that addresses, among other things, nutrition programs, on-farm environmental conservation, trade, rural development, farm credit, commodity programs (those targeting commodity crops like corn, wheat and soybeans), agricultural research and the marketing of U.S. farm products. The Farm Bill is debated and passed by Congress roughly every five years and is implemented by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

“This is a Farm Bill at breakneck pace,” said Marsom. “Typically, the Farm Bill is debated over a period of several months, allowing for input from a range of stakeholders. This time, the House and Senate Agriculture Committees are essentially attempting to

write the Farm Bill in two weeks. This may have a serious impact on priorities and programs that influence public health.”

Taking Action for Food Day

PHI has led other national organizations in sending a letter urging the House and Senate Agriculture Committee and the Super Committee to recognize that, in a time of national economic hardship, it is essential to maintain vital food assistance and nutrition programs.

PHI and its programs are also leading supporters of Food Day both in California and nationally.

In California, PHI's California Convergence initiative has partnered with Strategic Alliance, Prevention Institute and Roots of Change to promote Food Day's California petition campaign and related events. "Food Day lifts up the issues California Convergence communities have been working on for a long time – making sure that healthy foods are available and affordable for everyone," says Lisa Hershey, program manager with the PHI coordinating office for California Convergence. "We won't be able to build healthier communities without a healthy and sustainable food system."

Food Day organizers are encouraging supporters to get involved and send a strong message to policymakers about the importance of transforming our food system. Learn more at the [Food Day website](#).

Food Day organizers are also circulating two petitions, one for organizations to sign onto and one for individuals, which are to be delivered to Congress on Tuesday, October 25th. [Sign on to a Food Day petition](#) to urge policymakers to support improved food and farm policies.

PHI stands behind the vision of Food Day, and believes that a healthy, sustainable and equitable food system is essential to the long-term health and well-being of California and the nation.

About the Public Health Institute

The Public Health Institute, an independent nonprofit organization based in Oakland, California, is dedicated to promoting health, well-being and quality of life for people throughout California, across the nation and around the world. PHI's primary methods for achieving these goals include: sharing evidence developed through program interventions, quality research and evaluation; conducting public policy analysis and advocacy, providing training and technical assistance; and promoting successful prevention strategies to policymakers, communities and individuals. <http://www.phi.org/>

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