Partnership for a Healthier America (PHA), along with its partners, has learned that it is critical to create visibility for healthy and nutrient-dense foods in order to increase consumption of them. Here are just some of the ways we can work together to improve fruit and vegetable consumption that were shared at the Society of Nutrition Education and Behavior Conference in July 2023 as part of the Bee Marks Symposium.

BACKGROUND

In 2010, PHA was born out of a desire to make healthy eating and active living the new status quo for children and adults across the country. Over time the organization focused on pursuing “health equity” as it became clearer that lack of access to good food was predisposing people to obesity, diabetes and heart disease. The global pandemic made the cost of these inequities even clearer as the disease burden fell disproportionately on Black, Hispanic and Indigenous Americans and individuals with underlying conditions like obesity and diabetes. One of the key drivers of inequity is the lack of access to healthy food. Just 1 in 10 Americans meet the federal recommendations for fruit and vegetable (F&V) consumption, with the lowest intake of vegetables being among adults with low income (6.8%).

In order to address these inequities, PHA has identified three pillars necessary to support food equity:

1. A healthy food supply, in both public and private sectors, and through the charitable system.
2. Access to affordable, healthy food in all communities.
3. Awareness, knowledge, and skills that empower people everywhere to select good foods and to quickly prepare them at home.

SOLUTIONS

Our guiding principle is that healthy food should be available for all, and we have pledged to add 100 million servings of F&V to communities by 2025. Four strategies that guide our programmatic work:

1. Influence families. Provide families with short term, evidence-based, outcomes-oriented public health interventions centered on increased access to F&V to inform long-term healthy eating habits.
2. Innovate access. Work with cross-sector partners to remove the barriers to purchasing health-building foods.
3. Inspire institutions. Work with companies to make commitments that make the healthier choice the easier choice.
4. Invest in communities. Work with community-based organizations on solutions to affordable food access in multi-year, place-based initiatives connecting local food economies to community health promotion.

RESOURCES

In order to support these strategies, PHA has developed programming, partnerships, and practices to specifically address the core inequities in our food system. One method is to work with cities, states, and research institutions across the country to build actionable campaigns promoting F&V through the FNV campaign.

The campaign includes in-store marketing alongside marketing that people would see in their community, like wrapped city buses and farmers markets with local DJs, giving out fresh produce. We evaluated our work and learned in Nashville, Tennessee that local influencers drove a nearly 5% increase in awareness and consumption as compared to campaigns with national celebrities. PHA also partners with companies like KinderCare—who has been at the forefront of providing more nutritious food for our youngest eaters since 2014—to commit to meaningful change like doubling the servings of vegetables to over 40,000 school-aged children in 300 cities nationwide by 2025. KinderCare will also pilot food insecurity screening for families, and give employees tools to help families access nutritious foods in their communities through nutrition education. We support progress towards these goals, and publicly share results annually.
In the Mississippi Delta, community stakeholders are leading alongside PHA staff that live in the region to bring affordable, good food closer to home.\(^12\) Our programming seeks to upscale neighborhood grocers and introduce fresh produce at central locations, integrate locally grown produce from BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) farmers in direct service programs, and build a social marketing campaign to uplift a food ecosystem focused on F&Vs.

**CLOSING**

Improving the food supply and enabling a healthy food culture is the least costly and most sustainable solution for addressing the obesity and chronic disease epidemic and inequities facing America today. By one estimate, the present value of the extended longevity from increasing daily consumption of F&V by one additional portion (\(\frac{1}{2}\) cup per day) is $2.7 trillion.\(^13\)

When we work together, we can create a just food system that will create lasting health benefits for millions of Americans.

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**REFERENCES**