



# Leading the Way: California's Approach to Health and Equity in Tough Times



Photos: Tim Wagner/HEAC

## SUMMARY OF PRIORITY ACTIONS

Despite tough economic times, California must remain in the forefront as a national leader in health, environmental protection and community prevention. Doing so will maximize federal resources flowing into California, while maintaining a focus on effective governance and good solutions.

Priorities for action are summarized below in the following categories: I. Administrative Actions; II. Legislative Priorities; and III. Federal Leverage Points. Background and details are provided on subsequent pages.

**I. Administrative Actions.** The Brown Administration can take the following steps to position community prevention as central to the economy, sustainability and equity:

- a. **Defend the Prevention and Public Health Fund.**
- b. **Coordinate the State's response to Community Transformation Grants.**
- c. **Continue to position health and equity centrally within the Strategic Growth Council.**
- d. **Elevate recommendations of the Health in All Policies Taskforce and support implementation.**
- e. **Emphasize community-based prevention in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education.**
- f. **Foster collaboration between the Attorney General and the Governor's Office of Criminal Justice Planning and Gang and Youth Violence Prevention to advance a public health approach to prevent violence.**

**II. State Legislative Priorities.** Cross-Agency support for the following legislation could expedite Administrative action; position California for much needed Federal funds; and encourage businesses and institutions to align their practices with cost-saving measures that ensure health, safety, equity and sustainability:

- a. **Support safe passages to school for all children AB 516 (Pérez).**
- b. **Support baby friendly hospitals SB 502 (Pavley, de León).**
- c. **Promote healthy food access in underserved communities AB 581 (Pérez).**
- d. **Tax products that harm health AB 669 (Monning).**
- e. **Facilitate equitable transportation planning AB 441 (Monning).**
- f. **Showcase government as a model for buying healthy foods AB 727 (Mitchell).**
- g. **Increase the number of students that start their day with a healthy breakfast AB 839 (Brownley).**
- h. **Help eligible Californians access healthy foods AB 6 (Fuentes).**

**III. Federal Leverage Points.** Federal resources are vital to California's economy. California's congressional leadership can help align federal allocations with local needs by articulating California's priorities of health, equity and sustainability in the following pieces of federal legislation:

- a. **Ensure that the Farm Bill supports healthy, equitable, regional food systems.**
- b. **Emphasize active transportation in the next Federal Transportation Reauthorization.**

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### Introduction

Despite tough economic times, California has the opportunity to remain in the forefront as a national leader in health, environmental protection and community prevention. Just one year after passage of the 2010 Affordable Care Act (ACA), California's leadership has moved swiftly toward full implementation, in recognition that bold actions are needed to prevent chronic illness and injury—the leading drivers of Medi-Cal, health care costs, lost productivity and absenteeism. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and ACA brought \$60.9 Million federal dollars into California via Communities Putting Prevention to Work (CPPW). These funds saved and created jobs and serve as a down payment toward preventing future health care costs. Through a focus on community prevention, we can avert and recoup health costs while also attracting federal funds to bolster California's economy and advance our commitment to health, equity and sustainability.

*The Strategic Alliance for Healthy Food and Activity Environments and California Convergence*

recommend actions that will promote equity, a healthy environment, and healthy people throughout the state. Our statewide approaches must bolster communities that need it the most: communities of color and low-income communities with high rates of chronic illness, limited access to healthy food, disproportionately fewer opportunities for physical activity, and unequal access to safe parks, schools, and health resources.

This document details priority areas for action in the following categories: I. Administrative Actions; II. State Legislative Priorities; and III. Federal Leverage Points. Using health, equity and sustainability as central tenets, the recommendations focus on actions that the current Administration can take to lead California and the nation. Given the unique fiscal climate, recommendations focus on low and no-cost prevention strategies; actions that can reduce health care costs and yield return on investment; and steps that will maximize federal resources coming into California.

# I.

## Administration Actions

California is known throughout the country as an innovator and leader in prevention efforts. Our state has an opportunity to lead the nation in reducing chronic diseases and health inequities, just as it has led the nation in reducing tobacco consumption and eliminating unhealthy food and soda in schools. Administrative actions can support workplaces, small businesses, hospitals, and government to shift their practices to create a healthier environment for staff and visitors. Innovation is critical to our state's economy, and demonstrates a "new way of doing business." The Brown Administration can take these steps to position community prevention as central to the economy, sustainability and equity:

**a. Defend the Prevention and Public Health Fund.** The Affordable Care Act established a Prevention and Public Health Fund, funded through mandatory appropriations. The Fund provides \$15 billion for community prevention and public health over 10 years, prioritizing efforts that prevent illness and injury and build public health infrastructure. Threats to eliminate the Fund have been levelled, but efforts to repeal it will severely undermine ACA. ***Governor Brown can publically declare his support and commitment to the Fund, and lead efforts to encourage governors and other elected leaders throughout the country to support the Fund. State agency leadership can work with their counterparts from other states to jointly issue a statement of support for the Prevention and Public Health fund.***

**b. Coordinate the State's response to Community**

**Transformation Grants.** The Prevention and Public Health Fund invests in Community Transformation Grants (CTGs) which will build on Communities Putting Prevention to Work (CPPW). California Department of Public Health offered technical support and coordination of county applications for CPPW in 2009, and as a result the State and three California communities received a total of \$60.9 million in funds—*drawing more dollars into California and funding more communities than any other state.* CPPW funds have allowed Los Angeles, San Diego, and Santa Clara Counties to make groundbreaking changes that

will reduce chronic disease well into the future, while preserving and creating jobs and promoting economic development right now. The State Department of Public Health was also a recipient of CPPW funds. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced Community Transformation Grants in May 2011. ***California Health and Human Services Agency should ensure that the state's response to the CTG announcement is focused on preventing the leading causes of morbidity and mortality (e.g. tobacco, nutrition, physical activity and injury). As it did with CPPW, the Department of Public Health can collaborate with stakeholder groups to identify priority strategies, coordinate support for applicants and review and sign-off on proposals that meet key criteria.***

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DOING BUSINESS.'"

**c. Continue to position health and equity centrally within the Strategic Growth Council.**

The Strategic Growth Council (SGC) is well-positioned to embed health and equity in its framework for funding and decision-making. Health and equity are keys to a sustainable California. Planning and infrastructure spending must happen in places where the commitment to the health and well-being of low income communities is a priority. There are communities in California which lack safe drinking water, adequate storm drains and sewage lines, sidewalks, a single park or any meaningful access to fresh food. While the push to grow and develop confronts the entire State, the SGC can become a focal point for sustainable infrastructure development in California's low income communities. *SGC agencies can commit to the equity set-aside to ensure that the Council is investing in infrastructure for low income people, and can provide trainings to increase the SGC's inter-agency capacity to improve health and equity.*

**d. Elevate recommendations of the Health in All Policies Taskforce and support implementation.**

California has become a national model for its support in advancing Health in All Policies, a proactive approach that incorporates health and safety considerations into public policy and decision making. Through collaborative Health in All Policies action, the state can make more efficient use of resources, reduce chronic disease rates and future health care and treatment costs while supporting healthy places to live, work, learn, and play. Under the auspices of the Strategic Growth Council, the Health in All Policies (HiAP) Task Force is comprised of representatives from 19 state agencies who are tasked with "identifying priority programs, policies, and strategies to improve the health of Californians." In December 2010, the Task Force released a set of recommendations for working within and across disciplines to dramatically improve health in the state. California's efforts in advancing Health in All Policies lays the groundwork for a future in which government breaks down silos in order to advance health, the environment, and the economy. *The Brown Administration can support the continuation of the Health in All Policies Task Force through resources and administrative action, as necessary, and support implementation of the Health in All Policies Task Force recommendations.*

**e. Emphasize public health and sustainable community based prevention in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education.**

California receives more federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP-Ed) dollars than any other state (\$139 million). Per the Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010, the current SNAP-Ed program will become the Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Program (NEOP) in 2013 and the funds may be used for, "comprehensive, multilevel interventions...and community and public health approaches that improve nutrition."<sup>1</sup> Research indicates that preventing chronic disease starts at an early age and that improving the environments in which families make decisions is a key determinant of healthy eating and physical activity. Communities with high rates of SNAP-eligible residents often lack grocery store access, and have limited access to affordable, fresh, healthy food. *The Department of Public Health should maintain a leadership role and coordinate with stakeholders to ensure that the Nutrition Education and Obesity Program (currently known as SNAP-Ed) emphasizes comprehensive, evidence-based environmental approaches.*

**f. Work with the Attorney General and the Governor’s Office of Criminal Justice Planning and Gang and Youth Violence Prevention to advance a public health approach to preventing violence.** Violence is a public health issue and, increasingly, healthy food and activity leaders across the United States have identified violence and the fear of violence as major roadblocks to the success of chronic disease prevention strategies. The impact of violence in communities is far-reaching: when people do not feel safe in their communities they are less likely to use local parks and community centers and access services such as public transportation. Two California neighborhoods—Western Chula Vista and West Oakland—are part of a small-scale national pilot program funded by the National Convergence Partnership addressing the intersection between preventing violence and creating healthier food and activity environments. *The Department of Public Health can serve as a high level focal point outside of the justice system to advance a public health approach to preventing community violence, building on the leadership role it has played in preventing violence against women, and it can work with the Attorney General to strengthen and implement the safety recommendations developed by the Health in All Policies Taskforce.*

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## **II.** | **State Legislative Priorities**

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In many cases, administrative action can relieve the need for legislation. Issuing cross-agency level support for the following state legislative priorities could expedite Administrative actions, position California for much needed federal funds and encourage businesses and institutions to align their practices with the values of health, safety, equity and sustainability:

- a. Support safe passages to school for all children.** Since 1999, California has awarded \$267.7 million in Safe Routes to School grants, helping provide necessary infrastructure to make it safe for children to walk and bicycle to school. In an effort to increase the percentage of low income communities receiving these grants, AB 516 (Pérez) has been introduced to require public participation processes that help to promote greater inclusion of community voices in the development of funding proposals. It would also require the state to consider the benefit to disadvantaged communities as part of its criteria for awarding local grants for construction of bicycle and pedestrian safety and traffic calming projects under its “Safe Routes to Schools” initiative. *Issue a statement in support of AB 516 (Pérez) which would emphasize safe walking routes in low income communities with high rates of pedestrian injuries.*
  
- b. Support baby friendly hospitals.** Breastfeeding during infancy is linked to reduced risk of unhealthy weight gain, heart disease, diabetes, and infections among infants, and also has multiple health benefits for the mother. Women are better able to initiate and continue to breastfeed when they give birth in settings and work in workplaces that encourage it. Our state leadership must ensure that our children are given the best opportunities to lead healthy lives by determining ways to support breastfeeding and early childhood nutrition. *Ensure statewide support for new mothers who choose to breastfeed their infants by supporting SB 502 (Pavley, de León) which would require all maternity and delivery hospitals to have an infant feeding policy, preferably based on Baby Friendly USA or the Department of Public Health’s Model Policies.*

**c. Promote healthy food access in underserved communities.**

AB 581 (Pérez) would create the California Healthy Food Financing Initiative (CHFFI). Creating a CHFFI Fund in the State Treasury, and bringing together the California Department of Food and Agriculture with other state agencies and stakeholders to coordinate efforts is a smart way to achieve maximum impact. These efforts will allow CHFFI to leverage funding from sources such as New Markets Tax Credits, federal and foundation grant programs, incentives available to designated enterprise zones, the federal Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, and funding from private sector financial institutions to expand much-needed access to healthy food in underserved California communities. CHFFI holds great promise for addressing food-related chronic disease by improving residents' access to fresh, healthy food, while at the same time bringing much needed jobs and revitalization to low-income communities and communities of color suffering from hard economic times. The initiative is modeled after the successful Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing initiative which resulted in 88 stores built or renovated in underserved communities across the state. These stores improved access to healthy food, created or retained 5,000 jobs, increased local tax revenues, and stimulated additional development. An investment of \$30 million resulted in projects totaling \$192 million for the state. ***Support AB 581 to create a California Health Food Financing Initiative that will contribute to health and economic vitality of California communities.***

“CALIFORNIA HEALTHY  
FOOD FINANCING INITIATIVE  
HOLDS GREAT PROMISE FOR  
ADDRESSING FOOD-RELATED  
CHRONIC DISEASE BY  
IMPROVING RESIDENTS' ACCESS  
TO FRESH, HEALTHY FOOD,  
WHILE AT THE SAME TIME  
BRINGING MUCH NEEDED  
JOBS AND REVITALIZATION TO  
LOW INCOME COMMUNITIES  
AND COMMUNITIES OF COLOR  
SUFFERING FROM HARD  
ECONOMIC TIMES.”

**d. Tax products that harm health.** California was a world leader in taxing tobacco and using the revenues generated to fund comprehensive, highly effective, and world renowned tobacco control policies and programs. To stay at the cutting edge, Governor Brown's administration should proactively support an increase in the tobacco tax. Similarly, California can lead the nation by taxing soda and other sugary drinks and using the revenues generated to fund a chronic disease prevention program for California's children. Sugar sweetened beverages have been the largest contributor to obesity in the United States: these beverages account for 43% of the new calories that Americans have been consuming since the 1970s. It is estimated that soda industry products are responsible for \$1.4 billion in chronic disease-related health care costs and lost productivity annually in California. A statewide tax of one cent per teaspoon of sugar or high fructose corn syrup in soda and other sugary drinks (not diet sodas), similar to taxes currently being considered in more than a dozen cities and states around the country, would hold the beverage industry accountable for the economic harm done by their products and could bring California more than a billion dollars in revenue for prevention and treatment programs to mitigate the harm done by these products. A growing number of cities, including Sacramento and San Pablo, will be considering local soda taxes in the next year or so. ***Support state and local taxes on soda and other sugary drinks, including AB 669 (Monning) which would establish a statewide soda tax of one penny per ounce, bringing the state \$1.7 billion annually.***

**e. Facilitate equitable transportation planning.** Land use and transportation systems have enormous influences on health outcomes. Research shows that neighborhood and city designs can directly impact rates of health conditions such as asthma, diabetes, obesity, depression, unintended injuries, and some cancers. Although development and implementation of many plans occurs at the local or regional level, the state plays an important advisory role in encouraging health considerations in land use and transportation decisions. By requiring the California Transportation Commission to include health in its Regional Transportation Plan Guidelines, California will promote innovative approaches to improving our neighborhoods and creating a healthier and more prosperous state. *Demonstrate support for AB 441 (Monning) Building Healthy Communities which would include health and equity criteria in the state Regional Transportation Plan Guidelines.*

“RESEARCH SHOWS THAT NEIGHBORHOOD AND CITY DESIGNS CAN DIRECTLY IMPACT RATES OF HEALTH CONDITIONS SUCH AS ASTHMA, DIABETES, OBESITY, DEPRESSION, UNINTENDED INJURIES, AND SOME CANCERS.”

**f. Showcase government as a model for buying healthy foods.** With one of the nation’s leading agricultural systems, California is uniquely positioned to provide nutritious food options while adopting sustainable practices that invest in local economies and have a minimal impact on the environment. For example, the California Department of Parks and Recreation currently provides incentives that encourage concessionaires to develop relationships with local farmers and provide nutritious food. This allows state park visitors to have a selection of healthy foods and also invests in California’s local food system. *The Brown Administration can express support for Healthy Food Procurement, AB 727 (Mitchell) which would require the state to leverage its buying power and be a model for healthy food policy by ensuring that food sold in state buildings meets minimum nutritional requirements and sustainable purchasing practices.*

**g. Increase the number of students that start their day with a healthy breakfast.** AB 839 (Brownley) would simply require that school districts publically consider whether to offer the School Breakfast Program and determine how to maximize participation. California schools are missing out on \$350 million in federal funding to provide school breakfast to children.<sup>2</sup> Providing a healthy breakfast at school ensures that no student starts their school day hungry, that students are ready to concentrate and learn throughout the school day, that students maintain a healthy weight, and that federal School Breakfast Program (SBP) dollars are rightfully allocated to California’s school children. Currently, 70% (over 2.3 million) of California’s low-income children are not receiving school breakfast even though they are eligible, and the federal funds to pay for the meals are already set aside in the Child Nutrition Program. *Support AB 839 (Brownley) to claim untapped Food and Nutrition Service funds from the School Breakfast Program (SBP) to ensure that students start their days with breakfast and help afterschool programs take advantage of afterschool snack/meal programs.*

**h. Help eligible Californians access healthy foods.** AB 6 (Fuentes) was passed by the Assembly Committee on Human Services; it would streamline enrollment in CalFresh (SNAP) and increase federal funds to California. Each year, California loses out on \$4.9 billion in federal funds due to complicated enrollment processes in CalFresh (formerly the Food Stamp Program) leaving money ‘on the table’ while over 50% of eligible families go hungry. In fact, 49 states have already simplified their enrollment process, leaving California behind as one of just two states with confusing barriers to enrollment and expensive administrative costs. The USDA continuously rates California as one of the states with the lowest food assistance participation rates. This under-enrollment not only hurts our neediest, it hurts our economy: each CalFresh dollar spent generates \$1.79 in economic activity,<sup>3</sup> meaning that the \$4.9 billion in untapped federal dollars, translates to \$8.7 billion of much needed economic activity in California. ***Support AB 6 (Fuentes) to simplify CalFresh (SNAP) enrollment to boost California’s economy and better serve eligible Californians.***

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### **III. Federal Leverage Points**

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In addition to defending the Prevention and Public Health Fund, the federal policies described below can also bring significant resources into California. California needs to speak with a unified voice to ensure federal policies (and the resources attached to them) align with California’s commitment to health, equity, sustainability and safety. In coordination with Governor Brown, State Agencies, and allied Agency officials can do the following to help align federal allocations with local needs:

**a. Ensure that the Farm Bill supports healthy, equitable, regional food systems.** The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act (the Farm Bill) establishes the general direction for America’s farm and food policy. This bill, set for reauthorization in 2012, authorizes significant funds for nutrition assistance for low-income people and contains important provisions that could strengthen efforts to increase access to healthy foods. California is the nation’s top agricultural producer<sup>4</sup> and requires a Farm Bill that bolsters our health, agricultural industry, economy and environment. The 2012 Farm Bill can improve access to healthy food and support our state’s farmers through: healthy food incentives for SNAP recipients; improved processing and distribution infrastructure to connect small and mid-size local farmers with urban settings; expansion of SNAP benefits; and support for the Healthy Food Financing Initiative. As the 2012 Farm Bill draws closer, our state leadership can play a critical role in convening California food and farm stakeholders to ensure that California’s priorities are articulated in the national discussion on the Farm Bill. ***Governor Brown’s administration can coordinate with statewide advocates to ensure the Food, Conservation and Energy Act improves access to healthy foods for underserved populations and supports California growers.***

“CALIFORNIA NEEDS TO SPEAK WITH A UNIFIED VOICE TO ENSURE FEDERAL POLICIES (AND THE RESOURCES ATTACHED TO THEM) ALIGN WITH CALIFORNIA’S COMMITMENT TO HEALTH, EQUITY, SUSTAINABILITY AND SAFETY.”

## **b. Emphasize active transportation in the next Federal Transportation Reauthorization.**

As California works to prevent chronic conditions, reduce injuries, build sustainable communities and reduce emissions, we need an approach to transportation spending that supports walking, biking and public transit. The upcoming reauthorization of Safe Accountable Flexible Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) can expand upon SAFETEA-LU's multimodal (active and public transportation) approach. There are a range of opportunities within transportation reauthorization to advance walking and biking including: a) include provisions that all state and regional transportation plans consider health impacts and encourage walking and biking; b) support Safe Routes to School (S. 800) and other transportation programs that fund safe, active transportation; and c) affirm a national Complete Streets Policy to encourage all future roadway projects accommodate all road users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, and motorists of all ages and abilities. ***Governor Brown's administration can work with the Strategic Growth Council and the Business, Transportation and Housing Secretary to issue statements to Senator Boxer and the US Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works to encourage the Senate's version of the transportation bill preserves bicycle and pedestrian funding, and includes initiatives that support alternative forms of transportation.***

Strategic Alliance and California Convergence stand ready to work with members of the Brown Administration and the Legislature to advance these priorities. For questions about these recommendations, contact Linda Shak, MSW, at 510-444-7738 or [linda@preventioninstitute.org](mailto:linda@preventioninstitute.org).

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**CALIFORNIA CONVERGENCE** brings together community leaders in California working to change their local environments to create safe, healthy, equitable communities. Founded in 2007, CA Convergence is guided by representatives from communities across the state, and connects over 600 change agents. They represent local initiatives, as well as programs developed by six major health funders to nurture healthy people in healthy places.

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. Since 2001, the Strategic Alliance has been shifting the debate on nutrition and physical activity to one that examines corporate and government practices and the role of the environment in shaping eating and activity behaviors. The Alliance works to benefit the health and wellness of all California residents by promoting equitable environmental, community-based solutions and institutional and government policies and practices that support healthy eating and activity.

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1. "Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010." 7 USC 2036a § 241. Available at: <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-111publ296/pdf/PLAW-111publ296.pdf>
  2. California Food Policy Advocates. Putting Breakfast First (AB 839: Brownley). Available at: [http://www.cfpa.net/2011leg/ab839/839\\_FactSheet\\_2-20-11.pdf](http://www.cfpa.net/2011leg/ab839/839_FactSheet_2-20-11.pdf)
  3. California Food Policy Advocates. Lost Dollars, Empty Plates: The Impact of CalFresh Participation on State and Local Economies. November, 2010. Available at: [http://cfpa.net/LDEP\\_2010/LDEP\\_2010\\_final.pdf](http://cfpa.net/LDEP_2010/LDEP_2010_final.pdf)
  4. California Department of Food and Agriculture. California Agricultural Highlights: 2010. Available at : <http://www.cdffa.ca.gov/statistics/files/AgHighlightsBrochure10.pdf>