



*Indiana Healthy Weight Initiative
Policy Workgroup
End of Session Report – June 2017*

There are a number of 2017 legislative bills that impact policy concepts that we support because the evidence suggests that they will improve physical activity, nutrition, and obesity in Indiana. To understand more about the legislative process please [visit this state resource](#).

Improving Food Access –

[Senate Bill 277](#) – **Did not pass**. However, AHA staffing support remains for advocacy efforts related to food access ([Indiana Healthy Food Access Coalition](#)).

The issue of food deserts and healthy food financing will be a topic during a summer study committee. This means that legislators will continue to have exposure to the issue and it remains on their radar. With the chance of many Marsh grocery stores closing in the state this issue will not likely go away.

From Indiana Healthy Food Access Coalition Coordinator – Naima Gardner

The 2017 Indiana legislative session wrapped up on April 21st, and I wanted to keep you informed about the fate of our legislative efforts this year. Unfortunately, SB 277 did not make it into the state budget this year. Despite our strong advocacy efforts and broad, bipartisan support, we were unable to get the language into the final budget. That means that we did not get an appropriation, and the program (fund) itself was not created. While we are obviously very disappointed with this outcome, I must tell you that, in no small part due to your advocacy and dedication, we have made major headway with this issue! We have increased the size and strength of both our coalition and our grassroots network tremendously. Equally as important, we have learned some valuable lessons about how to modify our strategies going forward to ensure future legislative success.

To that end, this summer the Indiana Healthy Food Access Coalition will be attending farmers' markets and other local events around the state in an attempt to grow our grassroots networks in key legislative districts. I am also working to develop a comprehensive interactive list of food resources for the state of Indiana that will become part of our website. As always, we welcome and encourage your input and involvement. If you know of any events, activities, or community projects that you think the coalition should be aware of, please let me know!

Thank you so much for your ongoing support for healthy food access. Let's keep working together to ensure that ALL Hoosiers have access to healthy and affordable food!

Improving Food Access –

[Senate Bill 154](#) – **Passed**. The bill raised the asset limit for SNAP eligibility to \$5000 an improvement from \$2500. This means that people on SNAP will be able to have twice as much in savings and still be able to qualify for SNAP assistance. SNAP eligibility still depends on income levels but Indiana is one of



only [16 states that imposes an asset limit](#). Assets that count against the \$5000 cap include health savings accounts and education savings accounts.

[Senate Bill 9](#) – **Did not pass**. This bill sought to lift restrictions on SNAP eligibility for Hoosier’s convicted of felony drug charges. Currently, convicted drug felons are not eligible to receive SNAP benefits. Lifting these restrictions would allow Hoosiers reentering society to better access fresh fruits and vegetables.

Increasing Physical Activity and Nutrition Activity in Schools

[House Bill 1337](#) – **Passed**. Improves healthcare organization’s ability to perform telemedicine in Indiana. Existing pilot programs in rural, Indiana schools are using this to good effect. This technology may be used for obesity, nutrition, or physical activity related interventions from healthcare providers in the school setting.

Note: This bill is not explicitly designed to support physical activity and nutrition efforts but could be used to implement healthcare led responses to obesity in schools.

Increasing Active-living in Hoosier Communities by Supporting Changes to the Built Environment.

[House Bill 1174](#) – **Passed**. Established an Indiana bicycle taskforce to study concepts to connect existing bike trails, estimate costs of concepts, present ways to fund these concepts and develop an estimated timeline.

[Senate Bill 85](#) – **Did not pass**. Sought to allow communities to use TIF funding to fund school transportation and public transit

IHWI Support Rationales

Healthy Food Financing Initiatives

Because of the clear connection between Healthy Food Financing Initiatives and improving access to healthy foods, the Indiana Healthy Weight Initiative supports the creation of Healthy Food Financing Initiatives in Indiana. See our [policy paper](#) for more information about Healthy Food Financing Initiatives and how they interact with increased nutrition.

Improving Hoosier’s access to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in Indiana

Because low-income populations are more likely to suffer from poor nutrition, low food access, and obesity the IHWI supports efforts that reduce Hoosiers’ barriers to getting and using SNAP.



Increasing Physical Activity and Nutrition Activity in Schools

The IHWI recognizes that schools play a key role in the lives of Hoosier children with regard to physical activity and nutrition. We support efforts to more systematically include physical education, physical activity, and nutrition efforts in schools. This can be addressed in multiple ways including using the changes to federal education policy because of The Every Student Succeeds Act 2015 (ESSA). You can see how the IHWI thinks that might regarding ESSA changes via our [ESSA Policy Paper](#).

Built Environment

We know that many communities in Indiana lack opportunities to be physically active. Many communities do not have adequate sidewalks and walking infrastructure. New communities and developments are built without regard for modes of transit other than the car. In many communities, the streets are unfriendly to walkers, bikers, and pedestrians while schools are built far from communities making walking and biking to school difficult and unsafe. The Indiana Healthy Weight Initiative supports policies that increase active-living in Hoosier communities by supporting changes to the built environment.

The IHWI does not lobby on behalf of or against any bill. Nor do we ask our stakeholders to lobby on behalf of or against any bill. None of the information contained in this report should be construed as a call-to-action. It is intended to be informational and to raise awareness around legislative policy that is impactful to our work. Each individual and organization must decide on their own what, if any, actions to take regarding legislative policy.