

SUBJECT: Continuing the Healthy Food Advisory Committee.

COMMITTEE: Public Health — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 8 ayes — Kolkhorst, Naishtat, Alvarado, Coleman, S. Davis, S. King, Laubenberg, Zerwas

1 nay — Schwertner

2 absent — V. Gonzales, Truitt

WITNESSES: For — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Troy Alexander, Texas Medical Association; Robert Borowski, Texas Impact; Celia Cole, Center for Public Policy Priorities; Doug Dubois, Texas Petroleum Marketers and Convenience Store Association; Michael Gutierrez; Ashley Harris, Texans Care for Children; Carrie Kroll, Texas Pediatric Society; Suzanne Monroe-Santos, Sustainable Food Center's Farmer's Market; Joel Romo, American Heart Association; Jason Sabo, Children at Risk; Andrew Smiley, Sustainable Food Center)

Against — None

On — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Marcie Kirtz, Department of State Health Services)

BACKGROUND: The Healthy Food Advisory Committee was created last session by SB 343 by Nelson and is set to expire on September 1, 2011. The committee is charged with investigating the retail availability and prevalence of fresh food and to provide recommendations to the Legislature on developing a financing plan to bring fresh food to underserved areas.

DIGEST: HB 2414 would continue the Healthy Food Advisory Committee until September 1, 2013, and add to its charge to investigate and report on sources of funding to improve the retail availability of fresh and healthy foods.

The bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2011.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

The Healthy Food Advisory Committee offers a simple, no-cost way for the state to help guide and address problems caused by low income and poor nutrition. This committee has worked diligently to inventory state resources and study solutions used in other states to promote the availability of healthy foods. HB 2414 would give the committee two more years to formulate recommendations, including recommended ways to finance improvements to ensure fresh food availability. This bill's fiscal note states no significant fiscal impact.

Residents of economically distressed areas typically are served by fast food restaurants and convenience stores that offer little or no fresh produce. The lack of healthy, affordable food options often leads to higher levels of obesity and other diet-related diseases, such as diabetes, heart disease, and cancer.

In its December 2010 report "Food for Every Child" the Food Trust states that Texas has the lowest number of supermarkets per capita in the country and Houston has fewer supermarkets per capita than most urban areas. Other states have created financing programs -- usually public/private partnerships -- to increase the number of supermarkets and grocery stores in underserved communities. Under HB 2414, the advisory committee would investigate this issue and make needed recommendations.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

The state already has too many advisory committees. While this bill may have no fiscal note, the state still spends money on committee staff support. Either the staff should move ahead now to draft a financing program to promote the availability of healthy food or the committee should be allowed to expire.