
The Act FRESH Campaign

— FRESH Environments Support Health —

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Leadership Team

American Academy of
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American Heart/
Stroke Association

BOLD Teens/
Codman Square
Neighborhood Council
(Dorchester)

Boston Public Health
Commission

Fun n' FITchburg

Groundwork Lawrence

Healthy Weight Task
Force-Greater Lowell
Health Alliance

LivableStreets Alliance

Live Well Springfield

MA Association of
Health Boards

MA Public Health
Association

Nuestras Raíces
(Hoyloke)

Southeast Center for
Healthy Communities

Voices for a Healthy
Southcoast

Worcester Food &
Active Living Policy
Council

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GROUNDWORK LAWRENCE JOINS CIVIC AND GOVERNMENT LEADERS IN STATEWIDE PUSH FOR HEALTHIER NEIGHBORHOODS

On Monday, February 7th, a diverse coalition of local and statewide organizations from every region of the state will kick off the “Act FRESH Campaign” to improve access to healthy affordable food and public space for physical activity. The group will release a report and public policy agenda entitled *Priorities for Healthy Places, 2011-2012* aimed at reducing preventable diseases and containing healthcare costs.

The campaign kickoff, scheduled for 1:00pm in room 222 at the State House, Boston, represents a new chapter in the fight to build vibrant and healthy neighborhoods for all Massachusetts residents. By uniting across geography to focus on comprehensive public policy solutions, the groups seek to both harness and bolster the work being done in neighborhoods from Fall River and Lawrence to Worcester and Holyoke.

The speaking program will include remarks from **Dr. Howard Koh**, Assistant Secretary for Health, United States Department of Health and Human Services, who will speak about the imperative to make changes in the neighborhood environment in order to improve health. Dr. Koh will also discuss the connection between the Act FRESH Campaign and national health priorities. Dr. Koh will be introduced by Massachusetts Secretary of Health and Human Services **Dr. JudyAnn Bigby**.

“**Groundwork Lawrence** is playing a leadership role in this campaign because improving our community’s public health can only be achieved through a comprehensive approach. Better nutrition requires access to healthy food, physical activity is dependent on walkable and bikeable streets connecting to safe open spaces, and this campaign supports our holistic efforts of “changing places, changing lives,” said **Heather McMann**, executive director, a member of the campaign leadership team and speaker at Monday’s event.

The group will call for action to accomplish four priorities in the next two years:

1. Passage of **zoning reform** legislation that promotes communities whose structure makes healthy activity an easy choice every day;



2. Use of economic development resources to support more **affordable grocery stores** in food deserts and healthier corner stores;
3. Stronger state and federal **school nutrition** standards; and
4. Passage of legislation to reinstate school **physical education** requirements.

“We’ve been talking about the problems for a long time -- obesity, chronic disease, and rising health care costs,” said Valerie Bassett, executive director of the Massachusetts Public Health Association. “We have the tools to turn the tide, but we must muster the political will to tackle these problems at the state level and in communities across the state. That’s why we launched Act FRESH.”

The campaign comes at a time when poor nutrition and lack of physical activity are driving up obesity and chronic disease rates in Massachusetts. Nearly 60% of Massachusetts adults are overweight, as well as 1 in 3 students. Obesity-related medical costs in Massachusetts have soared to \$1.8 billion annually, with an additional \$16 billion in costs due to lost productivity. A report to be released by the campaign points to the inequities in neighborhood conditions that are contributing to stark disparities in health outcomes, with communities of color and low income communities suffering the worst.

“We must connect all the dots – from the street level to the State House,” said campaign leadership team member **Liz Sheehan Castro**, Project Manager for the Worcester Food & Active Living Policy Council. “This campaign is seeking policy changes that are essential for better health in all of Worcester’s neighborhoods, and our members are committed to taking action to accomplish them.”

“In Springfield, we’re working with community partners to make our streets safer for bikes and pedestrians, to bring a grocery store to Mason Square, and to get healthier food in preschools,” said leadership team member **Jessica Collins**, Director of Special Initiatives for Live Well Springfield. “By banding together with others in the Act FRESH Campaign, we can create the changes needed for this work to be successful here and all across the state.”

Civic leaders will speak about the campaign priorities and the impact these changes will make in their home communities:

- **WENZDAY JANE** a board member of LivableStreets Alliance and owner/CEO of Metro Pedal Power, will speak about the need to pass comprehensive zoning reform legislation that promotes healthy community design such as mixed commercial-residential districts that promote walking and biking, preservation of open space, and reduce exposure to pollution.
- **HEATHER MCMANN**, Executive Director of Groundwork Lawrence will speak about the need to develop a coordinated plan to increase access to healthy food stores in food deserts and improve healthy food in corner stores using economic development resources.
- **SHAQUILLE JONES** a high school student and leader in BOLD Teens will speak about the need for stronger state and federal school nutrition standards.
- **NANCY BONNELL** of Voices for a Healthy Southcoast and YMCA Southcoast will speak about the need for legislation to increase the hours, consistency, and quality of physical education in all grade levels in Massachusetts schools.

Legislators who will offer remarks include Senator **Susan Fargo** of Lincoln, Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Public Health, Representative **Jeffrey Sánchez** of Boston, House Chair, Joint Committee on Public Health, AND Senator **Thomas McGee** of Lynn, sponsor of physical education legislation.

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