



FOOD IS MEDICINE™
— COALITION —

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Governor Brown approves ‘Food Is Medicine’ \$6 million program for California’s chronically ill

Goal to enhance health outcomes expected to save taxpayers millions

Sacramento, CA - Governor Jerry Brown today approved a \$6 million innovative healthy food pilot project for low income Californians with chronic health diseases. The Food Is Medicine based program, which drew staunch support from State Senator Mike McGuire, and State Assemblymembers Phil Ting and David Chiu, among other legislators, is expected to save taxpayers millions.

The \$6 million project will be used over a three year pilot project period supporting a Food Is Medicine Coalition that includes **Project Open Hand** in San Francisco, **Ceres Community Project** and **Food For Thought** in the North Bay Area, **Health Trust** in San Jose, **Project Angel Food** in Los Angeles and **Mama’s Kitchen** in San Diego. The funds will target chronically ill Medi-Cal patients who suffer from congestive heart failure, cancer, diabetes, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, or renal disease.

The funding for this pilot project is included in SB 97, a budget bill that was voted on and approved in the Senate on Monday afternoon (June 26) and signed into legislation by Governor Jerry Brown today (June 27).

The soon-to-be launched program is modeled off of work in Philadelphia by the organization **Manna**. There, the pilot project demonstrated after delivering three medically tailored meals each day to 65 patients with chronic diseases for six months, their healthcare costs dropped from \$38,937 per month to \$28,183 per month and were 55 percent lower than other groups in [the study](#).

After working hand-in-hand with members of the statewide [Food Is Medicine Coalition](#), Senator McGuire embarked on a crusade to get funding secured in the budget for a statewide pilot program to include medically-tailored, home-delivered meals that are appropriate for the individual’s chronic diseases. He described the work of coalition as “life changing.”

“We couldn’t be more excited to turn this local success story into a statewide program that will improve the health of those who need it most while reducing costs for taxpayers over the long term,” Senator McGuire said. “The bottom line: We believe, over the next three years,

we'll demonstrate enhanced health outcomes for chronically ill Medi-Cal patients and save millions in health care costs.”

California State **Assemblymembers Phil Ting and David Chiu** strongly supported funding for this medically tailored meals project. Chiu sponsored the budget ask in the state assembly subcommittee in support of food as medicine. Alongside Chiu was **Assemblymember Blanca E. Rubio**, among others who testified in support. **State Senators Scott Wiener and Nancy Skinner** were also vocal supporters of the project.

A key catalyst that drove funding for this new pilot project included the results of a **UCSF/ Project Open Hand “Food Is Medicine”** research study that evaluated the impact of a medically tailored meal program for San Francisco and Alameda County residents with Type 2 Diabetes, HIV and/or dual diagnosis. The results, published earlier this year in the peer-reviewed [Journal of Urban Health](#) demonstrated a significant reduction in hospitalization (63%), an increase in medication adherence (50%) and a drop in ER visits (58%).

What experts are saying about the medically tailored meal program:

“This is an exciting time for our agencies and those very vulnerable, critically ill Californians we serve. We are particularly thrilled that the California Legislature had the vision to launch the very first statewide, medically-tailored-meal program in the United States. California is once again leading the nation in the implementing low cost/high return medical interventions to improve the health of our most marginalized and underserved citizens.”

- **Mark Ryle, CEO Project Open Hand, San Francisco**

“Los Angeles has the highest food insecurity rate in the country. This pilot program will go a long way to make sure that people who are sick and hungry can get the food that not only keeps them alive, but will help them heal. We applaud the State of California for being visionaries in reducing food stress in the state, while bringing down the cost of health care. With a medically tailored intervention, we expect health care costs to be reduced by at least 20 percent.”

- **Richard Ayoub, Executive Director, Project Angel Food, Los Angeles**

“We are thrilled for the opportunity to demonstrate that we can improve the health and wellbeing of vulnerable health-challenged California residents by providing medically tailored meals; and in doing so significantly decrease the cost of providing healthcare. A winning situation for all of California!”

- **Alberto Cortes, Executive Director, Mama’s Kitchen, San Diego**

“High quality food is the missing piece of the puzzle for many patients, especially those on Medi-Cal who are often food insecure. We are grateful to Senator McGuire whose vision and leadership were critical to creating and forming this pilot project. The research is clear - when patients have enough healthy food, especially when it’s tailored to their illness, they feel better and they do better. This translates to less emergency room visits, shorter hospital stays, a greater ability to adhere to treatment - and all of that leads to lower healthcare costs.”

- **Cathryn Couch, CEO Ceres Community Project, Sonoma County**

“I am so pleased to see progress toward ensuring that the most critically ill patients have access to the food they need to stay healthy in their homes. Not only do these meals nourish,

but they also hold promise for keeping people out of the hospital, preventing health crises, and allowing people to maintain independence at home.”

- Hilary Seligman, MD PhD UCSF Global Health Sciences

The pilot project will track the utilization of the program closely, along with health outcomes, before, during and after the program has ended. At the end of the 3-year program, the Department of Health Care Services will evaluate what impact the program had on hospital readmissions, decreased admissions to long term care facilities, and emergency room utilization and will report the findings back to the legislature.

ABOUT THE FOOD IS MEDICINE COALITION (FIMC): The [Food is Medicine Coalition \(FIMC\)](#) is an association of nonprofit, medically tailored food and nutrition services (FNS) providers from across the country. The FIMC advances public policy that supports access to food and nutrition services for people with severe and/or chronic illnesses; promotes research on the efficacy of food and nutrition services on health outcomes and cost of care; and shares best practices in the provision of medically tailored meals and of nutrition education and counseling. [Project Open Hand](#), [Ceres Community Project](#), [Project Angel Food](#), [Mama's Kitchen](#), [Food For Thought](#) and [Health Trust](#) represent a California contingency of the Food Is Medicine Coalition.

To schedule in an interview with a representative of the Food is Medicine Coalition, please contact Delfin Vigil at (415) 259-1247 or e-mail: dvigil@openhand.org