


<b>F R O M</b>	<b>Name &amp; Title</b>	Dr. Leana Wen, Commissioner <i>Leana Wen</i>	<b>Health Department</b>  <b>AGENCY REPORT</b>	
	<b>Agency Name &amp; Address</b>	<b>Health Department 1001 E. Fayette Street Baltimore, Maryland 21201</b>		
	<b>Subject</b>	<b>18-0193 – Food Desert Incentive Areas - Expenditure Requirements for Tax Credit</b>		

**To: President and Members  
of the City Council  
c/o 409 City Hall**

**May 17, 2018**

The Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD) is pleased to have the opportunity to review #18-0193 – Food Desert Incentive Areas - Expenditure Requirements for Tax Credit. The purpose of this legislation is to reduce the amount of expenditures required for existing, renovated supermarkets as compared to newly constructed supermarkets to qualify for the food desert incentive tax credit

Access to nutritious food is a persistent issue throughout Baltimore City. A lack of access to healthy foods is a key determinant of health. For this reason, BCHD, along with Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future, expended a great deal of resources in determining where access is limited.<sup>1</sup> From this research, BCHD and the intergovernmental collaboration, Baltimore Food Policy Initiative (BFPI), developed a Food Desert Retail Strategy, of which tax credits are a part.<sup>2</sup> These credits were intended to ease the burden on supermarkets in areas identified by BFPI as food deserts, now known as healthy food priority areas.

Programmatically, BCHD has addressed healthy food priority areas through Baltimarket. Baltimarket centers on the Virtual Supermarket Program, Healthy Stores Program, and Neighborhood Food Advocates Initiative.<sup>3</sup> Our virtual supermarkets allow residents to order, pay for, and pickup groceries at 14 community sites. The Healthy Stores Program seeks to reduce childhood obesity through assisting local corner and grocery stores in procuring healthier food alternatives. BCHD's Neighborhood Food Advocates are community members that assist in changing the food environment in areas identified as healthy food priority areas.

By increasing the incentive for local food retailers to renovate and grow in known healthy food priority areas, Council Bill #18-0193 will supplement BCHD's gains in expanding food access. For this reason, the Health Department urges a favorable report on this bill.

<sup>1</sup> <http://mdfoodsystemmap.org/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://planning.baltimorecity.gov/baltimore-food-policy-initiative>

<sup>3</sup> <https://health.baltimorecity.gov/programs/baltimarket>