

RESOLUTION # 11

HUNGER AND NUTRITION IN NEW JERSEY

1 **WHEREAS**, schools are an appropriate vehicle to promote the availability of
2 healthier foods and nutrition services, as they are uniquely positioned to model and reinforce
3 healthy eating behaviors, such as increasing knowledge of and improving access to fruits
4 and vegetables on the school campus and at school-related activities; and

5 **WHEREAS**, schools can serve as an outreach tool to carry positive nutrition
6 messages to parents and the community at large; and

7 **WHEREAS**, schools are required to develop and implement a school
8 nutrition/wellness policy and to promote nutritious alternatives, and the Department
9 continues to train schools and school food-service providers about marketing nutritious foods
10 to children and incorporating more fresh fruits and vegetables into the school meal program;
11 and

12 **WHEREAS**, the Department of Agriculture has significantly increased participation in
13 the School Breakfast Program by working in conjunction with the New Jersey Department of
14 Education to facilitate the inclusion of “breakfast after the bell” options in schools; and

15 **WHEREAS**, the WIC Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program, Senior Farmers’ Market
16 Nutrition Program and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and
17 Children are established through the United States Department of Agriculture but have been
18 administered in New Jersey through the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior
19 Services; and

20 **WHEREAS**, WIC coupon redemption rates in New Jersey have traditionally been low
21 compared to other states, and resistance has been met for the idea of “over-issuing” WIC
22 coupons in order to ensure the highest possible number of people are receiving them, with
23 the goal that they will also use them; and

24 **WHEREAS**, one medium-sized white potato has 45 percent of the daily value of
25 Vitamin C, more potassium (620 mg) than equivalent servings of bananas, spinach, or
26 broccoli, and 10 percent of the daily value of Vitamin B6; and

27 **WHEREAS**, a sound, balanced, nutritional diet is important to the well-being of
28 society, both in terms of the future productivity of our children and the health and well-being
29 of the population in general; and

30 **WHEREAS**, approximately 1.9 million people in New Jersey rely upon various
31 feeding and nutrition programs administered by or through the Department; and

32 **WHEREAS**, local purchases of food items including fresh fruits and vegetables can
33 benefit the local economy, growers and distributors, thus reducing the number of “food miles”
34 those commodities must travel to reach the end consumers; and

35 **WHEREAS**, timely information from state officials regarding the potential for sale of
36 locally grown and harvested foods through federal government programs such as SNAP,
37 WIC and the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program would help farmers more effectively
38 plan for what types and amounts of produce they should grow in a coming season; and

39 **WHEREAS**, volunteer gleaning organizations that provide surplus produce from
40 farms to community feeding operations are a valuable source of fresh agricultural products
41 that do not demand financial resources for purchasing this food, yet still have costs related to
42 storage and transportation of this produce; and

43 **WHEREAS**, the state and federal governments have identified the issue of “food
44 deserts” – areas where people lack significant access to fresh agricultural products due to
45 poverty, lack of viable transportation or scarcity of food retailers capable of providing an
46 adequate supply of such products – as an issue that deserves serious attention; and

47 **WHEREAS**, the Camden Children’s Garden continues to operate the Fresh Mobile
48 project launched as a pilot program in 2013 to bring fresh produce and other agricultural
49 products to residents of Camden, which has been designated by the USDA as one of the
50 most severe food deserts in the nation; and

51 **WHEREAS**, an additional way to bring more fresh produce and other agricultural
52 products to designated food deserts is through government initiatives to increase the number
53 of “cold boxes” in neighborhood corner stores and bodegas, provided those boxes are used
54 for the keeping and retailing of fresh agricultural products; and

55 **WHEREAS**, the New Jersey Department of Agriculture has for the past 25 years
56 worked with municipalities and agriculture groups to establish and support community
57 farmers markets, where, in addition to selling to the general public, farmers can accept
58 federally issued Senior Farmers Market Nutrition program vouchers from senior citizens,
59 which the farmers then redeem for additional income.

60 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that we, the delegates to the 103rd State
61 Agricultural Convention, assembled in Atlantic City, New Jersey, on February 7-8, 2018, do
62 hereby continue to support the efforts of the Department and its partners in United States
63 Department of Agriculture (USDA), as well as community feeding organizations to ensure
64 that healthy food choices and fresh fruits and vegetables are available to all children and
65 adults throughout New Jersey.

66 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge the Department to continue to lead in
67 promoting healthy foods and sound dietary choices to improve the well-being of New
68 Jersey's citizens by promoting programs such as “Eat Right, Move More,” “Jersey Fresh
69 Farm to School”, “Farm to Preschool”, “Farm to Summer” and school wellness policies.

70 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge the Department to continue promoting
71 the increased participation in School Breakfast programs, especially in regard to inclusion of
72 “breakfast after the bell” options, which have helped New Jersey significantly increase
73 participation over the past several years.

74 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge the Governor and Legislature to
75 recognize the critical nature of maintaining state funding levels supporting the federal school
76 nutrition and commodity programs in an amount that will ensure that no accompanying
77 federal funds are lost.

78 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge those at all levels responsible for
79 purchasing or otherwise acquiring food for community feeding programs to ensure that those
80 foods are grown, harvested or produced in New Jersey to the greatest extent practicable.

81 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge New Jersey state officials who
82 administer feeding and nutrition programs to provide the earliest possible notice to the farm
83 community in this state as to the expected demand for produce and other agricultural
84 products through those programs, providing farmers with a better planning tool for the types
85 and amounts of such products to be produced in a coming season.

86 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we stress the critical nature of the Governor and
87 Legislature providing adequate funding for the State Food Purchase Program (SFPP) in the
88 FY2019 budget at a level at least equal to the current funding, and that additional funding
89 should be provided for storage and distribution of emergency food.

90 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge the Department to work with New Jersey
91 fruit and vegetable processing companies and the Rutgers Food Innovation Center to
92 produce pre-packaged, value-added, single-serving New Jersey fruit and vegetable
93 products, and "Made with Jersey Fresh" products, for use in school food service menus.

94 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge the Governor and Legislature to
95 continue including volunteer gleaning organizations among those who receive financial
96 support in their efforts to feed the hungry.

97 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we strongly support increased participation in the
98 following safety-net federal and state nutrition programs administered by the Department:
99 National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program; After School Snack
100 Program; Special Milk Program; Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program; Child and Adult Care
101 Food Program; Summer Food Service Program; School Commodity Program; The
102 Emergency Food Assistance Program; the State Food Purchase Program; WIC and Senior
103 Farmers Market Nutrition Program, and we urge the Department to work toward having white

104 potatoes established as an eligible commodity in the WIC, SNAP and other food-assistance
105 programs in which they currently are not eligible.

106 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we support educational, outreach and marketing
107 measures to increase the redemption rate of the WIC coupons issued in New Jersey, so that
108 more farmers can connect with more WIC consumers, for the benefit of all.

109 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we support the Department's continued
110 participation in the state's multi-agency "Healthy Foods Initiative," which has been convened
111 to address the issue of food deserts by developing a more extensive supply of locally grown
112 and produced, fresh agricultural products into those areas where such items are now difficult
113 to obtain, and to expand the ways in which residents of those areas can obtain those items.

114 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we support initiatives to increase the number of
115 "cold boxes" used to store fresh fruits, vegetables and other agricultural products in corner
116 stores, bodegas and other food retailers in urban areas designated as "food deserts,"
117 provided the cold boxes remain dedicated to that purpose.

118 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we encourage the continuation of the Fresh
119 Mobile project, operated by the Camden Children's Garden, which is designed to bring fresh
120 fruits, vegetables and other agricultural products to the residents of Camden.

121 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge enhanced support for the Rutgers
122 Institute for Food, Nutrition and Health and Rutgers Cooperative Extension to deliver
123 science-based educational programs in nutrition and healthy living.

124 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we encourage the transfer of administration of
125 the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program vouchers from the Department of Health to the
126 Department of Agriculture, provided that such transfer includes sufficient personnel and other
127 resources moving to the Department of Agriculture.