

Illinois Working To Eliminate Food Deserts In 2024, Thanks To Belt

December 20 2023 3:28 PM



SPRINGFIELD – A new law going into effect on Jan. 1 is expected to eliminate the number of food deserts in Illinois’ communities, thanks to State Senator Christopher Belt.

“There is no reason why individuals should struggle to find access to fresh food,” said Belt (D-Swansea). “We have communities all over the state that have this issue, and it’s time that is addressed.”

In 2021, the Illinois Department of Public Health issued a study that found 807 census tracts are considered food deserts, meaning urban residents have to travel more than a half-mile and rural residents must travel more than 10 miles to get to the nearest grocery store.

Under the new law, the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity is required to provide grants and other forms of financial assistance to grocery stores located in or to be located in a food desert. This aims to help mitigate the issue of food deserts across the state.

“The Grocery Initiative Act is a crucial step toward ensuring equitable access to healthy food for all residents in Illinois,” said Belt. “This is a great stride toward a healthier, fairer future for all.”

[Senate Bill 850](#) takes effect Jan. 1 2024.