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H.B. 543
136th General Assembly

Bill Analysis

Version: As Introduced

Primary Sponsors: Reps. Upchurch and Williams

Racheal Vargo, Research Analyst

SUMMARY

- Requires the Department of Development to establish and administer a Food Desert Elimination Grant Program.
- Requires a grocery retailer to meet specific requirements to qualify for a grant.
- Requires the Department to develop an application process for applicants to receive a grant.
- Requires a grocery retailer that receives a grant to provide quarterly reports to the Department.
- Appropriates \$200,000 in both FY 2026 and FY 2027 to support the activities of the program.

DETAILED ANALYSIS

Food Desert Elimination Grant Program

The bill requires the Department of Development to establish a Food Desert Elimination Grant Program to incentivize the establishment of grocery stores in food deserts and provide access to healthy food in Ohio. A food desert is a geographic area in which residents have limited access to fruits, vegetables, and other healthful foods, through either grocery stores, farmer's markets, or other food providers, as identified by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Access Research Atlas. The bill allows the Department to adopt requirements and procedures as necessary to implement and administer the program.¹

To qualify for a grant, a grocery retailer must meet both of the following requirements:

¹ R.C. 122.162(A) and (B).

- It sells or proposes to sell fresh fruit, vegetables, shelf-stable items, and other healthful foods.
- It has established or proposes to establish a grocery store in a food desert.

An individual grocery retailer cannot receive a grant greater than \$15,000 during a fiscal year.²

The Department must develop an application process for applicants to receive a grant. The application must include a requirement that documentation be included with the application to verify that the grocery retailer is or will be located in a food desert and has plans to sell fresh fruits, vegetables, shelf-stable items, and other healthful foods.³

A grocery retailer that receives a grant must provide quarterly reports to the Department. The reports must include the amount of state funds granted, the program's health impact, and any other information that the Department considers necessary for program evaluation and oversight.⁴

Appropriation

The bill appropriates \$200,000 in both FY 2026 and FY 2027 to support the activities of the Food Desert Elimination Grant Program.⁵

HISTORY

Action	Date
Introduced	10-22-25

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² R.C. 122.162(B) and (C).

³ R.C. 122.162(D).

⁴ R.C. 122.162(E).

⁵ Sections 2, 3, and 4.