

**Testimony to Seattle City Council**  
**Comment on the Local Food Action Initiative Resolution**  
**Speaker: Kelly Horton, MS, RD, CD**  
**April 16, 2008**

Thank you President Conlin and esteemed Council Members for the opportunity to speak about the very important issue of Seattle's food system. I am a registered dietitian working at Lifelong AIDS Alliance and am a member of the Seattle/King County Acting Food Policy Council. I also own a small business, called Connect Nutrition, where I act as a food policy consultant for a variety of organizations.

In my many roles, my focus remains hunger eradication and environmental nutrition essentially improving access to healthful food for all people while at the same time preserving our environment and the livelihoods our farmers. The lack of a nutritious diet results in many health problems including chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, and obesity. During the last 18 months I have led educational forums around our state to improve people's understanding of the 2007 Farm Bill and how its policies contribute to such appalling health trends. While seemingly unrelated to our own backyards, this national legislation does impact our ability to create an equitable, healthy, and just food system in Seattle. The Local Food Action Initiative would facilitate cooperation between groups working on issues such as the Farm Bill to ensure that the needs of our community are met through national as well as local food system policies.

Local policies greatly influence the sustainability of food systems. There are many people living in our vibrant city who can not afford to eat each enough, particularly healthful choices, and they rely on food from the emergency food system stream including food banks and meal programs. Food banks are often reliant on donations from corporations interested in discarding their unsold products – not necessarily the healthiest products. Meal programs are operating on limited budget which excludes them from purchasing higher quality produce and protein foods. At Lifelong we provide nutritious meals for our clients; however, we only have funding to provide one third of a client's nutritional requirement. Our meals are meant to supplement our client's diets instead they are oftentimes the only source of food for our clients. We need a collaborative approach to resolving barriers to providing high quality, nutritious, local foods to those most in need of it in our neighborhoods. A Food Policy Council an example of a proactive way to accomplish this and could be implemented within the content of the proposed Food Policy Action Plan.

I believe that we need a sanctioned body in Seattle to examine local policies within the context and from the lens of food, nutrition, and health. Experts would be supported in analyzing and promoting public policy that considers land use and transportation affecting farm market viability and food access, education and public health programs influencing the ability of citizens to effectively participate in the food system, institutional purchases of locally grown foods, and economic development strategies to promote a more sustainable food economy. Food Policy Councils at the city level are typically involved in policy decision making processes as well as community project oversight. The Acting Food Policy Council efforts are an example of how successful that model has been at drawing attention to both policy and projects implemented to increase sustainability in our food system. I urge you to adopt a resolution that includes provision for a funded Food Policy Council to reshape the Seattle food system into a healthier and more just one.

I applaud you, President Conlin and other Council Members, for your leadership in creating a healthier and more just food system for all of Seattle residents. Thank you.