SUSTAINABLE FOOD POLICY BOARD

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January 28, 2013

Mayor Lee Leffingwell,
Austin City Council
301 West Second Street
Austin, Texas 78701

Dear Mayor, Mayor Pro Tem, and Council Members:

As you are aware, the Sustainable Food Policy Board (SFPB) has been studying the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, or "food stamps")enrollment and outreach in the Austin/Travis County area. In April 2012, SFPB recommended that the Austin City Council create a citywide outreach campaign to increase SNAP enrollment, and that the City of Austin research possible grants or other sources of funding to increase the value of SNAP dollars spent locally at farmers markets and other retailers for fresh produce.

Last year, Austin/Travis County Health and Human Services Department (ATCHHSD) led a working group to review these issues, and has adopted recommendations for the Austin City Council Public Health and Human Services Committee. ATCHHSD is scheduled to present these recommendations at the February committee meeting.

In addition to the working group's recommendations, the SFPB would like to again urge the city to look at funding opportunities to make fresh produce more accessible for the SNAP population. Our board member Kathy Green will be attending the committee meeting next month to discuss this.

Again, SFPB appreciates your attention to these important issues, and stands ready to assist the City Council and City staff in addressing them.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can answer questions or be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

Paula J. McDermott
Chairperson

cc: Marc Ott, City Manager
        Bert Lumbreras, Assistant City Manager
        Carlos Rivera, Director, Health and Human Services Department
        Philip Huang, Executive Liaison, Health and Human Services Department
        Robert Kingham, Staff Liaison, Health and Human Services Department
        Sherri Fleming, County Executive, Travis County HHS & Veteran Services
        Travis County Commissioners