

Congressman Danny K. Davis (IL-07)
Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee
Testimony, March 9, 2017

Good Morning. Thank you Chairman Frelinghuysen and Ranking Member Lowey for this opportunity to talk about food deserts, food security and also request your assistance in combating the loss of access to healthy produce in *Urban America*.

Food is the most powerful thing in our lives and the most powerful thing in community development.

Having grown up in rural Arkansas, I know first-hand the challenges of having no grocery store or supermarket to find healthy food options. Our nearest grocery store was roughly 5 miles away – if not for my father’s green thumb and the ability to use the land for food, we may have had issues with nutrition.

Nevertheless, once you leave Chicago’s immediate downtown area, there is not grocery store for miles...and without access to adequate transportation; many families choose to shop at their local corner stores and bodegas that may lack healthier food options.

Members, there is a solution. Over the past decade I have worked with organizations that are working to change the urban landscape and use vacant lots, vacant properties and high-rise roof tops to grow fruits and vegetable offering for these communities thru, aquaponics, hydroponics and urban farming.

Many of these farms have proved to be highly successful in stabilizing communities that have undergone disinvestment, crime and poverty. We can look in neighborhoods for Chicago's urban and roof-top gardens; and former tilapia farms at the Cook County Jail, neighborhoods displaying Cleveland's 'hoop houses'; neighborhoods working for Milwaukee's Tilapia production; redeveloped vacant lots in Detroit for gardens and chicken farming and roof tops in New York for honey bee production.

Many of these areas were once impacted by high crime rates and high unemployment. Urban farming has given these individuals a sense of purpose and stabilizing these communities while delivering a local and nutritious food source.

I am hopeful that the Agriculture Appropriations Committee can look to define and support a program that will further encourage urban farming to combat food deserts and I look forward to working with you to ensure its success.