

## Topic Proposal

### **1. Topic**

The topic selected for this research proposal pertains to food deserts. Proper nutrition plays an essential role in supporting healthy human development and growth - both physically and mentally. However, vulnerable communities such as the homeless and those living in poverty find themselves in food deserts with limited access to affordable and nutritious food owing to a combination of several socio-economic factors. This disposition puts such populations at risk of developing diet-related health conditions like cardiovascular disease, cancer, obesity, dental diseases, and malnutrition. In turn, the emerging acute or chronic illnesses increase the economic burden within communities as occasioned by the high cost of medical services. As such, conducting research focused on food deserts should provide necessary insights into appropriate interventions for increasing access to healthy food within disadvantaged and marginalized communities.

### **2. Issue Type**

Issues surrounding food deserts are societal and economic. This observation stems from the notion that food deserts typically emerge within low-income urban areas inhabited by the poor and homeless. Moreover, the price of food commodities coupled with income inequalities also influences the emergence of food deserts. For instance, high prices create an economic barrier

limiting access to a healthy diet. Low-income families also lack access to reliable transport - limiting access to distant markets. On a social level, income inequality, segregation, urban planning, urban policies, and discrimination have significantly contributed to the selected issue. Therefore, exploring the issue from a social and economic standpoint should result in targeted interventions with far-reaching practical implications.

### **3. Information found/learned in my initial browsing research**

Initial research into food deserts revealed interesting insights. In a recent article, Allcott et al. quantified economic factors responsible for nutritional inequality (2). According to the authors, low-income neighborhoods have a higher probability of becoming food deserts with low availability of healthy food options (Allcott et al. 2). As such, residents of such areas tend to adopt unhealthy eating habits. Other factors discussed by Allcott et al. as causes of food inequality include zoning restrictions, crime, and high prices of groceries (2). Kelli et al. shared similar sentiments by exploring the association between food deserts and increased risk of cardiovascular disease (1). According to the researchers, living in a food desert increases the likelihood of disease development and the emergence of adverse outcomes. Berkowitz et al. linked food deserts to food insecurity and poor glycemic control in individuals living with diabetes (1188). This initial information reveals a link between access to food and health outcomes.

### **4. Source Material**

The proposed research study will rely on various source material, including reputable websites, recently published journal articles, books, and news stories on the topic. Utilizing different information sources should provide better insights and practical solutions. Triangulation of

findings will also play an essential role in enhancing the quality of conclusions and recommendations.

**5. The goal of the project/ what I hope to learn through this process.**

There is widespread poverty in inner cities, and I hope to help learn a solution for improving access to healthy foods among those living in poverty. This topic is meaningful or relevant to me because I eat healthy every day, but I know widespread poverty and homelessness exist in my country. I want to learn about poverty distribution and strategies for helping people access healthy foods. As a goal, I would also want to impact my peers with the research outcomes because they should care about poor people, mainly because most of them have never gone to bed hungry. My peers also know the significance of volunteering to help others.

Works Cited

- Allcott, Hunt, et al. "Food Deserts and the Causes of Nutritional Inequality." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 2017, pp. 1-79. doi: 10.3386/w24094.
- Berkowitz, Seth A. et al. "Food Insecurity, Food 'Deserts,' and Glycemic Control in Patients with Diabetes: A Longitudinal Analysis." *Diabetes Care*, vol. 41, no. 6, 2018, pp. 1188–1195. doi: 10.2337/dc17-1981.
- Kelli, Heval M., et al. "Living in Food Deserts and Adverse Cardiovascular Outcomes in Patients with Cardiovascular Disease." *Journal of the American Heart Association*, vol. 8, no. 4, 2019, doi: 10.1161/jaha.118.010694.