

# **Belt Announces Available Funding For Grocery Store Equipment Upgrades**

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**EAST ST. LOUIS** – State Senator Christopher Belt is encouraging local grocers to apply for funding through the Illinois Grocery Initiative for the purchase of updated energy-efficient equipment.

“There are many factors that play a part in operating a successful grocery store,” said Belt (D-Swansea). “Through the Equipment Upgrades Grant Program, our local grocery stores have the opportunity to receive funding to aid in purchasing necessary, updated equipment.”

Rising energy costs lead to outdated equipment, which presents a major expense for small community grocers. Under the Equipment Upgrades Program, eligible grocers can apply for grants to upgrade heating, ventilation and air conditioning equipment; refrigeration units and freezers; lighting systems; and other systems providing significant energy savings.

Eligible grocers should [apply online](#) by March 25. In order to support the businesses most in-need, grocers must be independently-owned with fewer than 500 employees and no more than four grocery stores. Grocery stores located in food deserts as defined by the USDA map will be given priority.

The Equipment Upgrades Program is the first program to be rolled out as a part of the Illinois Grocery Initiative's efforts to address food insecurity by supporting local grocers and reducing food deserts.

"We need to consider all that goes into functioning grocers and provide them with help in any way we can," said Belt. "Upgrading store equipment is a step in the right direction to ensuring we have accessible grocers to help combat food insecurity."

The Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity will hold webinars to assist applicants on Jan. 31 at 10 a.m. and Feb. 8 at 2 p.m. Learn more about the Illinois Grocery Initiative [here](#).