**Junior League of Greater Orlando Celebrates Passing of Healthy Food Financing Initiative**

ORLANDO, Fla. (4/15/16) – Yesterday, the Governor signed a bill into law that will address “food deserts” in Florida. Known as HB 153, or the Healthy Food Financing Initiative, the bill aims to improve access to healthy, fresh foods in Florida’s underserved communities. This, the Junior League believes, will also address children’s growth and overall physical and mental health in these communities.

HB 153, which was derived from the proposed Healthy Food Retail Act (2013) written by Junior League of Greater Orlando member Kate Martin, has been heavily supported and promoted by the League.

"We are thrilled to see the hard work of the Junior League of Greater Orlando and the Junior Leagues of Florida result in the passing of such an inspired piece of legislation," said Traci Deen, Public Affairs Chair. "The fact that so many children and families in the state of Florida live in a food insecure environment is unacceptable. I am proud to be a part of an organization that takes action to bring about substantial change."

Today's news is a great win for the Junior League of Greater Orlando as the organization's community focus since 2010 has been to improve childhood health, hunger and poverty in Central Florida.

Another example of the organization's commitment to childhood health and hunger in the Greater Orlando area is the HIP Kids program, operating at Rock Lake Community Center.

HIP Kids, which stands for Healthy, Informed, Playful Kids, is a bi-monthly after-school program created by the Junior League of Greater Orlando to address and solve the immediate and long-term challenges faced by hungry children. Since its inception, HIP Kids has provided more than 9,600 pieces of fresh fruit, 552 Pantry Plus Boxes (dinner meal essentials) and 436 healthy hot dinners to HIP Kids and Families.

“After witnessing first-hand how many children in our HIP Kids program could not identify or name many fruits and vegetables, I knew we had to do something,” said Kate Martin, a member of the Junior League of Greater Orlando and author of the original bill addressing food deserts in 2013, of which HB 153 is derived. “I’ll never forget when I needed to find fresh vegetables for an event at Rock Lake, and it took me over 10 minutes to find a single grocery store, and it was miles away. A family without a car living in the community wouldn’t have had access, I thought. That was the wake-up call for me.”