



**State of Connecticut**  
**SENATOR DONALD E. WILLIAMS, JR.**  
*Twenty-ninth District*  
**President Pro Tempore**

**Testimony**  
**of**  
**Senator Donald E. Williams, Jr.**  
**Concerning**

**SB 1080, An Act Concerning Access to Health and  
Nutritional Information in Restaurants.**

**Public Health Committee**  
**March 6, 2009**

Senator Harris, Representative Ritter, and Members of the Committee:

I would like to thank you for raising a bill to address this important topic that I have long supported.

As you know, obesity is a public health crisis in Connecticut and across the country that shortens lives and drives up health care costs. Current estimates are that over one-quarter of Connecticut high school students are obese or overweight, a dramatic increase over a relatively short time period. The consequences of obesity start in childhood; children not yet ten have been diagnosed with diabetes caused by obesity. The consequences continue into adulthood. One study estimated that \$850 million of annual adult medical expenditures in Connecticut was due to obesity. We all end up paying the bill for these increased costs to the healthcare system.

Many factors lead to obesity. The bottom line, however, is that individuals who consistently take in more calories than they expend in a day are at-risk for becoming overweight and obese. Solid evidence has demonstrated that the increase in obesity in

the United States is largely related to an increase in the number of calories consumed per day.

This conclusion was verified by a recent study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*. This study examined the relative success of different diets in helping individuals lose weight. It concluded that the type of diet didn't matter—only whether people were able to reduce the number of calories consumed. All the discussion about cutting fat or cutting carbohydrates is less important than having knowledge about calories. It is all about calories.

If we expect people to take action, though, and reduce the number of calories that they consume, we need to make sure that they are equipped with the appropriate information. SB 1080 will accomplish this simple goal by requiring that the number of calories in each food item is posted on the menus in chain restaurants. Numerous studies have shown that consumers—and even dietitians—cannot accurately estimate the number of calories contained within prepared foods. This bill would give consumers that basic and critical information.

New York City was one of the first jurisdictions to require caloric information to be posted on menus; since then, California has passed a similar law and this week, Nashville approved a similar approach. If California and Nashville can agree that posting caloric information in chain restaurants is an important public health goal, then I hope that Connecticut can follow their lead.

We need to take action in many areas in order to make sure that Connecticut residents continue to enjoy good health. This bill is an important step towards addressing this goal, and I look forward to your support.

Thank you very much.