

**Joint Committee on Finance, Revenue and Bonding**  
*Governor's Senate Bill 1007*

**Written Testimony of Joe Moore, Executive Director**  
**International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub Association (IHRSA)**

**March 7, 2011**

---

Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this important issue. My name is Joe Moore, and I am the Executive Director of the International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub Association (IHRSA). On behalf of the more than 7,000 health and fitness businesses represented by IHRSA, I ask that the following testimony on SB 1007, "an Act Concerning the Governor's Recommendations on Revenue," be entered into the record.

The current sales tax on health club services sends the wrong message to the citizens of Connecticut, as would removing the current sales tax exemption for yoga instruction. The government should be working to encourage physical activity and healthy eating. Instead, additional taxes on health club services - and now yoga studios, should SB 1007 reach enactment as written - discourages people from joining health clubs and exercising.

Currently, Connecticut is engaged in a critical fight to combat the leading consequence of physical inactivity: obesity. In 2009, 59.3% of Connecticut's adult population was either overweight (37.9%) or obese (21.4%). Moreover, from 1990 to 2009, the prevalence of obesity among Connecticut adults increased 76%, from 11.7% to 20.6%.<sup>1</sup>

Also, as you are no doubt aware, the health effects of obesity and overweight are devastating; including an increased risk for heart disease, cancer, diabetes, stroke, high blood pressure, obesity, and osteoporosis.

Obesity and overweight have serious economic consequences, as well. In Connecticut, for example, the Center for Disease Control estimates that 4.3% of adult medical expenditures, or \$856 million, are attributable to obesity, 78% of which is financed by Medicare and Medicaid.<sup>2</sup>

In conclusion, there is a demonstrated need for Connecticut to do everything to encourage – not discourage – physical activity. By removing the sales tax exemption for yoga services, the Connecticut legislature will send the wrong message to the public about the need for physical activity. Therefore, I would respectfully request the committee to consider the role of yoga, health clubs, and physical activity in the state's efforts to decrease health care costs, reduce government spending, and improve the quality of life for thousands of Connecticut residents, and to vote for this measure.

---

<sup>1</sup> Connecticut Department of Public Health.

<sup>2</sup> The Obesity Challenge in Connecticut-Obesity Fact Sheet, Connecticut Department of Public Health.

We would welcome the opportunity to serve as a resource to the Committee on this issue. If you have any questions, please contact me at 800-228-4772 or IHRSA's Senior Legislative Analyst, Tim Sullivan, at [ts@ihrsa.org](mailto:ts@ihrsa.org).