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Statement concerning

Raised Bill 6525 – An Act Concerning a Childhood Obesity Task Force

Committee on Children

March 5, 2013

This statement is being submitted on behalf of the Connecticut Academy of Family Physicians in support of Raised Bill 6525 – An Act Concerning a Childhood Obesity Task Force. Childhood obesity is quickly becoming a health care epidemic and there is no better time for Connecticut policy makers and health care providers to take on the task of determining the best way to help children suffering from obesity and preventing other children from becoming obese.

Ongoing medical research continues to prove that obese children are more likely to suffer from numerous diseases and health problems than are healthy-weight children. Diabetes, asthma, hypertension, and liver disease are just a few of the diseases that obese children are at an increased risk of developing. According to Walt Larimore, a Colorado Family Physician, an 8-year old who is obese and hypertensive has a vascular age of a 38 year old and will die 10 to 20 years sooner than children of a healthy weight. As adulthood approaches obese children are at an increased risk of cardiovascular disease, several types of cancer and other diseases in addition to the health problems that they have already been living with.

The problems for obese children are not just physical. The psychological effects of obesity cannot be understated. Children suffering from obesity are often teased or treated as outcasts by their peers, they are often isolated and prone to low self-esteem. This in turn leads to a decreased desire to participate in physical activity which helps the vicious obesity cycle to continue.

Healthy lifestyle habits begin in childhood. It needs to a priority of this legislature to determine how we can help provide our children with the foundation for health living. We encourage this Committee to pass this bill and to include a family physician who treats children on the task force.