



State of Connecticut

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House Bill No. 5746, AN ACT CONCERNING A TASK FORCE ON CHILDHOOD OBESITY

To Co-Chairs Senator Gerratana and Representative Johnson, Vice-Chairs Senator Slossberg and Representative Miller, Ranking Members Senator Welch and Representative Srinivasan, and esteemed colleagues,

Thank you for this opportunity to testify on the Childhood Obesity crisis.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) uses a formula to calculate an individual's height-to-weight ratio known as a Body-Mass Index, or "BMI." In most cases, an individual with a BMI between 25 and 30 is considered to be overweight; anyone with a BMI 30 or over is considered obese. At present, the CDC indicates 17% of children and adolescents aged 2-19 in the United States are overweight. That's 12.5 million children. This figure is three times the rate of the previous generation. Overweight and obese children face serious health conditions of a physical, emotional, and social nature. Many of these conditions follow them into adulthood where approximately **1/3 of the American population** meets the definition of obese.

Here at home, Connecticut faces similar statistics. According to a study published in 2008 by the Connecticut Department of Public Health, more than **25% of high school students are overweight**. According to many parents, and the American Obesity Association, today's children and teenagers are the most inactive generation in history.

The American Academy of Pediatrics and the National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity have outlined some of the health problems associated with obesity:

- Physical problems include high blood pressure, Type 2 Diabetes, sleep apnea, orthopedic problems, and glucose intolerance.
- Emotional problems include depression and negative body image.
- Social problems include stigma, bullying, and negative stereotyping.

Fortunately, this is a health care crisis that we can prevent. The health problems are costly to society in terms of dollars and cents. Some studies estimate the cost of obesity-related health problems cost Connecticut **\$856 million in one year alone**, but the impact to an individual can be devastating. If we can prevent bullying, depression, and diabetes by helping a community identify opportunities to increase physical activity, I'd venture to say that's a priceless rate of return on our investment.

My vision for the General Assembly's Task Force for is one made up of public officials, community leaders and experts that would identify proven methods to stop this epidemic.

I humbly suggest the Task Force identify the state and community resources which can be shared with those who need or want assistance. Connecticut should have one clearinghouse location for distributing information or assistance.

Thank you for your consideration, and I would be happy to entertain any questions you may have concerning this proposal.