

Yale Rudd Center for Food Policy & Obesity

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Testimony of the Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity,
H.B. 5746
Public Health Committee
February 27, 2013

Dear Senator Gerratana, Representative Johnson and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony in support of Raised Bill No. 5746, An act concerning a task force on childhood obesity.

The Yale Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity seeks to improve the world's diet, prevent obesity, and reduce weight stigma. The Center connects scientific data with public policy, developing targeted research to inform and empower the public and policy makers in order to maximize the impact on public health.

Childhood obesity is a significant health concern in Connecticut. Over one-quarter (26.6%) of Connecticut high school students are either overweight (14.1%) or obese (12.5%) and one-third of Connecticut kindergarten and third-grade students are overweight or obese. Sixty percent of overweight children already exhibit at least one risk factor for heart disease, the number one cause of death;ⁱ type 2 diabetes represents up to 45% of new pediatric cases, compared with only 4% a decade ago;ⁱⁱ and according to the American Academy of Pediatrics, adolescents who are overweight have an 80% chance of being obese as adults. An estimated \$856 million of adult medical expenditures are attributable to obesity each year in Connecticut.ⁱⁱⁱ

In 2010, Marlene was appointed co-chair along with Lucy Nolan of End Hunger CT, to the Sustinet Child and Adult Obesity Task Force. A key recommendation in our final report was to **establish a permanent task force which would bring the focus and diversity of information to bear on the issue of childhood obesity, allowing for the creation of policies and programs based on best practices and scientific data and the subsequent evaluation of measures taken to decrease childhood obesity in the state.**

As a collaborative body of legislators, consumers, advocates, health care providers, and state agencies, the Childhood Obesity Task Force could advise both state agencies and the legislature on strategies to promote environmental change and better access to health care for currently obese individuals.

Core functions of the Task Force could include tracking national and state efforts; communicating relevant information throughout the state; coordinating grant applications; and guiding state administrative and legislature policy.

We believe the legislation under consideration is an important step to ensure a healthy future for Connecticut's children.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this very important public health issue.

Respectfully submitted,

Handwritten signatures of Marlene Schwartz and Roberta R. Friedman. The signature of Marlene Schwartz is on the left, and the signature of Roberta R. Friedman is on the right.

Marlene B. Schwartz, PhD
Deputy Director

Roberta R. Friedman, ScM
Director of Public Policy

ⁱ National Governors Association. *NGA report on healthy living: Investing in Connecticut's health*. Washington, DC. www.nga.org

ⁱⁱ Lavizzo-Mourey, R. (2007). Childhood obesity: What it means for physicians. *JAMA*, 298.8, 920 – 922.

ⁱⁱⁱ Finkelstein, E.A., et al. (2004). State-level estimates of annual medical expenditures attributable to obesity. *Obes Res*, 12, 18 – 24.