

**March 2, 2016**

**Testimony of the Connecticut Association of Directors of Health supporting HB 5303:  
an Act Concerning Childhood Obesity**

CADH supports *HB 5303: an Act Concerning Childhood Obesity*. State and local public health professionals have long been at the forefront of battling obesity in Connecticut. Among many examples of the important work of local health departments specifically:

- The Northeast District Department of Health (serving Brooklyn, Canterbury, Eastford, Hampton, Killingly, Plainfield, Pomfret, Putnam, Sterling, Thompson, Union and Woodstock) and other partners in a regional collaborative launched the *WriteSteps School Walking Initiative* pilot project to add a daily walk at school in the Plainfield School System. During walks, students discussed an assigned topic each day and wrote about it upon returning to the classroom. The no-cost program has decreased reports of disciplinary problems, improved test scores, and enhanced physical activity for both students and staff.
- The Eastern Highlands Health District (serving Andover, Ashford, Bolton, Chaplin, Columbia, Coventry, Mansfield, Scotland, Tolland and Willington) helped implement *Safe Routes to Schools* programs, which examine conditions around schools and conduct projects and activities that work to improve safety and accessibility and reduce traffic and air pollution in the vicinity of schools. As a result, these programs help make bicycling and walking to school safer and more appealing transportation choices, thus encouraging a healthy and active lifestyle from an early age.
- The Norwalk Department of Health, in collaboration with the Norwalk Department of Recreation and Parks, secured an obesity prevention grant to transform an overgrown and unused property into Fodor Farm Community Garden. Each year, families and community groups register for use of 220 garden plots. Fodor Farm also offers educational sessions on cooking and nutrition and a seasonal farmers' market. Healthy food access can significantly combat obesity.

Measures to promote physical activity and reduce the consumption of high calorie sweetened beverages in child care settings, represent important steps in promoting

childhood physical health and reducing the costs associated with childhood obesity related illnesses.

Thank you for your consideration. CADH is a nonprofit organization comprised of Connecticut's 74 local health departments and districts. Local health directors are the statutory agents of the Commissioner of Public Health and are critical providers of essential public health services at the local level in Connecticut.