



**State of Connecticut**  
**GENERAL ASSEMBLY**  
STATE CAPITOL  
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

**Task Force on Childhood Obesity**

Minutes

March 27, 2014

**Co-Chairs:** Sen. Dante Bartolomeo and Rep. Diana Urban

**Attendance:** Sen. Dante Bartolomeo, Rep. Diana Urban, Rep. Kim Fawcett, Sen. Art Linares, Rep. Christie Carpino, Dr. Fredericka Wolman, Dr. Jean Mee, Christine Parker, Brittany Lee Silvestrini, Alecia Andrews, Sylvia Gafford-Alexander, Lucy Nolan

The meeting was convened at 1:14 p.m.

Sen. Bartolomeo called the meeting to order by welcoming everyone and introducing John M. Bailey, II, State Director for Government Relations of the American Heart Association and Susan P. Maffe, Food Service Director for the Meriden Public Schools for a presentation.

John Bailey outlined the childhood obesity crisis by illustrating that one in three American children and teens are overweight or obese and all the health related issues associated with it. Mr. Bailey reviewed food procurement policy and nutrition standards. He then discussed what role the state can play in addressing the issue of obesity. The state provides millions of meals to vulnerable populations and is the largest purchaser of food. By applying standards to improve foods served and sold on government property, it ensures agencies "walk-the-walk". Mr. Bailey suggested a number of state agencies for procurement reform such as the Departments of Children and Family Services, Developmental Services, Mental Health & Addiction Services, Social Services, and Energy & Environment Protection. Places that have procurement reform in action are New York, Massachusetts, Washington state and Los Angeles County. He concluded by saying that improving the nutritional quality of foods and beverages in public places is a low-cost public health strategy that can help to change norms and create healthier food and beverage choices.

Susan Maffe, a registered and licensed dietitian with a Master's Degree in Healthcare Management and twenty-plus years of experience in food service management, described food service in the Meriden public schools. She discussed Healthy Foods Certification, and the Connecticut Nutrition Standards that exceeds any standards put in place at the federal level and that they are voluntary. Although Healthy Food Certification is voluntary and school districts

must certify participation annually with a formal vote by their Board of Education, participation and support continue to grow. The Connecticut Nutrition Standards focus on limiting total fat, saturated fat, trans fat, sodium and sugars; moderating portion sizes and promoting increased intake of nutrient-dense foods such as whole grains, fruits and vegetables, for example. The Connecticut Nutrition Standards are science-based and supported by 28 health and education organizations in the state. Meriden Public Schools participated in the pilot program in 2003-2005 evaluating the effect of nutrition standards on student purchases for foods offered outside of the reimbursable meal. With the introduction of nutrition standards, they witnessed an increase in reimbursable meal purchases and a decrease in a la carte sales. The Connecticut Nutrition Standards are reviewed annually by the CSDE state nutrition standards committee and updated, as needed, to reflect changes in nutrition science and national health recommendations. Ms. Maffe gave an overview of the state's role in food procurement. She emphasized that nutrition is a rapidly changing and complex science and suggested the appointment of a committee of experts with governmental authority to act as needed to respond to changes in nutrition science. On behalf of the task force's nutrition subcommittee, Ms. Maffe outlined several recommendations - to consider the valuable tools developed and maintained by CSDE since the implementation of the Connecticut Nutrition Standards; consider the success of Healthy Food Certification Standards and Connecticut Nutrition Standards; and adopt Healthy Food Certification Standards and model state procurement guidelines upon the Connecticut Nutrition Standards.

Sen. Bartolomeo thanked John Bailey and Susan Maffe for a very informative presentation. Both presenters said they would send additional information for the task force's review.

A discussion with task force members followed the presentation.

Rep. Urban stated she is seeing the term 'sugar alcohol' more frequently and asked what it means.

Susan Maffe stated that it typically relates to a word ending in 'ol' like sorbitol and that it is an artificial sweetener.

Sen. Bartolomeo asked if the process for making lower fat milk resulted in a higher sugar amount. She was told this during a discussion on a bill related to nutrition and child care settings.

Susan Maffe stated that she was not aware of any increasing of sugar for low-fat milk and that reducing fat is the key nutritional benefit.

Lucy Nolan stated that she believes it is a natural sugar and that they don't add sugar when reducing fat in milk.

Sen. Bartolomeo asked for a report from the Physical Activity subcommittee.

Dr. Mee, reporting on behalf of the Physical Activity subgroup, stated they were prepared to make a substantial proposal and asked to make a presentation at the next task force meeting.

Sen. Bartolomeo stated that would be fine and it was decided that it could be in conjunction with Lucy Nolan's suggestion for a recess before lunch presentation.

Sen. Bartolomeo stated that the task force will meet next after the end of session. Probably mid-to-late May. An announcement will be sent out to everyone ahead of time.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:21 p.m.