Dear Chairman Kennedy and Ranking Member Enzi:

We urge you to make school children’s health a priority in the 110th Congress. If incorporated into the reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act, the Fitness Integrated with Teaching (FIT) Kids Act of 2007 (S.2173) would help reduce the current alarming levels of childhood obesity. This legislation, introduced by Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA), will encourage public schools to provide regular, quality physical education and promote healthy lifestyles.

Childhood obesity in the U.S. has reached truly epidemic proportions. The Department of Health and Human Services projects that 20 percent of children and youth in the U.S. will be obese by 2010. And the health consequences are tragic. Overweight adolescents have a 70 percent chance of becoming overweight adults, increasing their risk for chronic disease, disability and death.

Evidence suggests that healthy, active children learn more effectively and achieve more academically. Several large-scale studies have found improvements in students’ academic performance with increased time spent in physical education. And, similarly, recent research has found a strong correlation between academic performance and aerobic fitness. Evidence further suggests that physical activity has a positive impact on cognitive ability and preventing tobacco use, insomnia, depression and anxiety.

The FIT Kids Act amends the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act to:

- Require all schools, districts and states to report on the quantity and quality of physical education they provide;
- Ensure that children get the information and support they need from schools and parents throughout their education to help them live a healthy lifestyle;
- Support professional development for physical education teachers, health teachers, and principals to help promote children’s healthy lifestyles and physical activity; and
- Fund a study to examine the impact of health and physical activity on student achievement and find effective ways to improve healthy living and physical activity for all children.
We believe that the FIT Kids Act can make a real difference in the fight against childhood obesity without overburdening schools, districts and states. Through its multi-faceted approach that includes reporting requirements, research and support of children and teachers, this is an unprecedented opportunity to start to bring this epidemic under control. As you reauthorize the No Child Left Behind Act, we urge you to incorporate this important legislation.

Sincerely,

American Heart Association
American Stroke Association
National Association for Sport and Physical Education
Afterschool Alliance
American Association for Health Education
American Association for Physical Activity and Recreation
American College of Sports Medicine
American Diabetes Association
American Public Health Association
American School Counselor Association
American School Health Association
BlueCross BlueShield Association
Campaign to End Obesity
Center for Science in the Public Interest
First Focus
Georgia Coalition for Physical Activity & Nutrition (GPAN)
Grocery Manufacturers Association
Healthy Schools Campaign
Illinois Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance
International Health, Racquet, and Sportsclub Association
International SPA Association
International SPA Association Foundation
National Action Against Obesity
National Association for Girls and Women in Sport
National Association of County and City Health Officials
National Association of Health Education Centers
National Coalition for Promoting Physical Activity
National Dance Association
National Education Taskforce
National Parent Teacher Association
National Recreation and Park Association
National Society of Physical Activity Practitioners in Public Health
New York State Nutrition Council
North Carolina Alliance for Athletics, Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance
Obesity Action Coalition
Partners for a Healthy Nevada
PE4Life
Researchers Against Inactivity-related Disorders
Save the Children USA
School Nutrition Association
Shaping America’s Health: Association for Weight Management and Obesity Prevention
Society for Public Health Education
Society of State Directors of Health, Physical Education and Recreation
Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association
Sports, Play and Active Recreation for Kids (SPARK)
Summit Youth Development (New Jersey)
The YBH Project Inc. (Youth Becoming Healthy)
Trust for America’s Health
United States Water Fitness Association
YMCA of the USA

Cc: Members of the Senate HELP Committee