

Senator Edward M. Kennedy  
Chairman  
Senate HELP Committee  
SD-428 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510-6300

Senator Michael B. Enzi  
Ranking Member  
Senate HELP Committee  
SD-428 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510-6300

February 12, 2008

Dear Chairman Kennedy and Ranking Member Enzi:

We urge you to make school children's health a priority in the 110<sup>th</sup> 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