March 19, 2010

The Honorable Jared Polis
501 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Polis:

We, the undersigned, strongly support your NEW Schools Act, which would strengthen local school nutrition and physical activity wellness policies and U.S. Department of Agriculture technical assistance and training to enhance the effectiveness of the child nutrition programs and expand nutrition education and promotion efforts to support and improve children's diets and health.

One in three young people is either overweight or obese, raising their risk for heart disease, cancer, stroke, and diabetes, which are responsible for two-thirds of deaths in the U.S. Habits and diets during childhood affect health throughout life. Nutrition education, physical activity and health literacy are essential to protecting children’s health, addressing health care costs, and enhancing national investments in the child nutrition programs.

Established in the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004, local wellness policies call for school districts to address nutrition and physical activity in schools. That law has resulted in many schools adopting policies for foods sold on campus, physical activity, and nutrition education. However, implementation across the country has not been uniformly strong. In addition, many schools lack access to resources and best practices to help them implement wellness policies, and many local wellness policies remain unavailable to parents and other key members of the school community.

The NEW Schools Act would strengthen local school nutrition and physical activity wellness policies by enhancing their implementation, establishing standing local wellness policy committees, making the wellness policies more transparent to parents and school staff, and including policies for physical education and food marketing in schools.

Current nutrition education and promotion efforts in schools are insufficient. Schools lack adequate resources to provide effective nutrition education throughout the school environment. Many child nutrition programs include some nutrition education components but there is no or limited coordination.

The NEW Schools Act would provide $70 million per year for the U.S. Department of Agriculture to provide grants to states to enhance technical assistance and training and dissemination of model materials and best practices to help schools improve the nutritional quality of school foods, the offerings through school vending machines, the use and processing of school commodities, and local wellness policy development,
implementation, and evaluation. It also would provide grants to school districts to
strengthen and support local nutrition education and promotion programs and policies.

The NEW School Act would enhance and strengthen current national investments in the
child nutrition programs and support child health. We appreciate your leadership on this
important legislation to support nutrition and physical activity by school children.

Respectfully,

America Walks
American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance
American Diabetes Association
American Dietetic Association
American Heart Association
American Institute for Cancer Research
American Public Health Association
American School Health Association
American Society of Bariatric Physicians
Association of State and Territorial Public Health Nutrition Directors
B. Sackin & Associates
Be Active New York State
California Center for Public Health Advocacy
CardioVision 2020
Center for Science in the Public Interest
Community Health Partnership: Oregon’s Public Health Institute
Consumer Federation of America

Directors of Health Promotion and Education
Eat Smart, Move More South Carolina
Ehrens Consulting, Bismarck, ND
Fitness Forward
FGE Food and Nutrition Team
Focus on Agriculture in Rural Maine Schools (FARMS)
Health Promotion Council
Healthy Schools Campaign
HealthyPlanet
Hunter College, Program in Nutrition
Maternity Care Coalition
National Action Against Obesity
National Association for Sport and Physical Education
National Association of State Boards of Education
National Consumers League
National PTA
National WIC Association
North Dakota Dietetic Association
Obesity Action Coalition
Oral Health America
Partners for a Healthy Nevada
Partnership for Prevention
Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine
Prevention Research Center, Yale University School of Medicine
Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association
Produce for Better Health

Produce Marketing Association
Shape Up America
Save the Children
Society for Nutrition Education
Teachers College, Columbia University, Program in Nutrition and Center for Food & Environment
Trust for America’s Health
United Fresh Produce Association