

**TESTIMONY OF
CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION
SUBMITTED TO THE
SELECT COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN
Tuesday, February 8, 2005**

HB 6631, An Act Concerning Childhood Obesity

The Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) supports **HB 6631, An Act Concerning Childhood Obesity**, which would authorize the Department of Public Health (DPH) to design a program to reduce the prevalence of obesity in children and adolescents. Obesity is a serious problem among children and adolescents, which is alarming given the association between obesity and many serious conditions, including cardiovascular disease (the leading cause of death in Connecticut) and diabetes. Results from the 1999-2002 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES), using measured heights and weights, indicate that an estimated 16 percent of children and adolescents ages 6-19 years are overweight¹. The data for adolescents are of notable concern because overweight adolescents are at increased risk to become overweight adults. HB 6631 may help to reverse this trend by reinforcing healthy habits in schools, providing DPH with comprehensive statewide information about obesity patterns.

We would encourage DPH to work with experts in the field since many studies of social marketing campaigns and community-based interventions to reduce childhood obesity, increase physical activity levels or both have not been successful^{2,3}.

It would be particularly important to develop a strategy that engages parents in the process, as there is a significant correlation between parental support and youth physical activity. Physical activity interventions targeted at youth should include and evaluate strategies to increase parents' capacity to provide instrumental and motivational support for their children's physical activity⁴. Likewise, there is research indicating that parents who display disinhibited eating and a lack of dietary restraint are more likely to have overweight or obese children⁵.

Thank you for your consideration of our position.

For additional information, contact CHA Government Relations at (203) 294-7310.

¹ Hedley, AA, Ogden, CL, Johnson, CL, Carroll, MD, Curtin, LR, Flegal, KM. Overweight and obesity among US children, adolescents, and adults, 1999-2002. *JAMA* 291:2847-50. 2004.

² Pate RR, Saunders RP, Ward DS, Felton G, Trost SG, Dowda M. Evaluation of a community-based intervention to promote physical activity in youth: lessons from Active Winners. *American Journal of Health Promotion*. 2003 Jan-Feb;17(3):171-182.

³ Cavill N, Bauman A. Changing the way people think about health-enhancing physical activity: do mass media campaigns have a role? *Journal of Sports Science*. 2004 Aug;22(8):771-790.

⁴ Trost SG, Sallis JF, Pate RR, Freedson PS, Taylor WC, Dowda M. Evaluating a model of parental influence on youth physical activity. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*. 2003 Nov;25(4):277-282.

⁵ Hood MY, Moore LL, Sundarajan-Ramamurti A, Singer M, Cupples LA, Ellison RC. Parental eating attitudes and the development of obesity in children. The Framingham Children's Study. *International Journal of Obesity and Related Metabolic Disorders*. 2000 Oct;24(10):1319-1325.