



For Immediate Release

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FIT Kids Act Introduced in House and Senate with Bipartisan Support to Promote Physical Activity in Children

(Washington DC) Today, the FIT Kids Act, bipartisan and bicameral legislation to increase awareness and opportunities for physical activity in schools, was introduced by Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA), Chairman of Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee; the bill was introduced in the House on Monday by Representatives Ron Kind (D-WI) and Jim Gerlach (R-PA). The measure, spearheaded by the American Heart Association and long supported by the Campaign to End Obesity Action Fund, is a valuable step in enabling America's children to get more active — something that is necessary not only for reversing the nation's obesity epidemic but also in boosting academic achievement.

Both the House and Senate bills would expand opportunities for physical activity in U.S. schools and increase public awareness about how much activity kids are really getting. A survey by Action for Healthy Kids found that 62 percent of parents ranked their child's school as "good" or excellent" in making daily physical education available to all students. Yet, in reality, only 3.8 percent of U.S. elementary schools, 7.9 percent of U.S. middle schools and 2.1 percent of U.S. high schools provide daily physical education for students, according to the Centers for Disease Control. The legislation would require local educational agencies to publicize whether schools are providing age-appropriate physical education and the amount of time students spend in required physical education relative to recommended national standards.

"For too long, parents have been woefully under informed about the amount and quality of activity that their children need and receive in school," said Penny Lee, Executive Director of the Campaign to End Obesity Action Fund. "Without adequate information, such as what the FIT Kids Act provides, parents, educators and communities cannot take meaningful steps to address dangerously insufficient levels of physical activity — something which our kids fundamentally require to be healthy and which our nation needs to compete."

The measure would also further professional development for health and physical education teachers, fund research to further examine the link between children's health and their academic achievement, and direct the National Research Council to examine effective ways to incorporate physical education activities in schools.

Data has shown that physically-active children perform better academically. In one 2010 study by researchers at the University of West Virginia, children who had the best average scores in standardized tests in reading, math, science and social studies were considered physically fit at the start and end of the study, while children who were not physically fit had the lowest academic performance. The

National Association for Sport and Physical Education has also reported that 95 percent of surveyed parents believe that regular, daily physical activity helps children do better academically.

“Our children’s health is a national imperative,” added Lee, noting that children who are physically active also live healthier lives and endure lower health care costs as adults. Obesity-related conditions in 2009 accounted for 9.1 percent of all medical spending, up from 6.5 percent in 1998 — a 40 percent increase. “More must be done to provide kids with the daily physical activity they need to be healthy and succeed academically, and the FIT Kids Act is an important start. We commend Senator Harkin, Rep. Kind and Rep. Gerlach, as well as the American Heart Association, on the introduction of this valuable legislation.”

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About the Campaign to End Obesity Action Fund

The Campaign to End Obesity Action Fund is dedicated to federal policy changes that can reverse one of America’s costliest diseases. The Campaign convenes leaders from industry, academia, public health and associations to speak with one voice for measures to reverse the obesity epidemic and promote healthy weight in children and adults.