



805 15th Street, N.W., Suite 650, Washington, DC 20005  
202-466-8100 www.obesitycampaign.org

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\*\*\*Media Contact\*\*\*

Rebecca Einhorn: (202) 466-8700

## **Note to Sec. Duncan: What About Physical Activity in Schools?**

### *President's FY 2012 Budget Should Make Physical Education a Priority*

**(Washington, DC)** Absent from U.S. Department of Education Secretary Arne Duncan's budget testimony on Tuesday before the Senate Budget Committee was any sign that the Department would make physical activity in elementary and secondary schools a priority. The omission raises concerns not only given the obesity crisis plaguing U.S. children, but also in light of the fact that, according to the Centers for Disease Control, only 3.8 percent of elementary schools, 7.9 percent of middle schools and 2.1 percent of high schools provide daily physical education for their students.

While the President's FY 2012 budget includes valuable support for the "Successful, Safe and Healthy Students Initiative" (SSHSI) —grants to support promote students' nutrition education and healthy eating, among other things— the Budget and the Secretary's comments suggest that physical education for school-aged children may be short shrifted and key programs, like the Carol M. White Physical Education Program (PEP), may be at risk.

"We are concerned by the Department's apparent lack of commitment to address woefully insufficient levels of physical activity among our youth," said Stephanie Silverman, senior advisor to the Campaign to End Obesity Action Fund. Noting that this commitment is particularly important as funding priorities are set and a blueprint for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act is being established, Silverman said, "a failure to address the current physical activity gaps —or, worse, to exacerbate them by eliminating existing children's programs— threatens not only the physical well-being of our students but also our ability to compete as a nation. The Secretary's leadership in U.S. education is commendable, and we call on him to make physical activity in schools a clearer priority, both in words and in action."

Physically-active children perform better academically, a fact reinforced by recent research by the California Department of Education and others. Children who are physically active also live healthier lives as adults — critical data when taken in context of obesity's cost to our health care system, where 10 percent of all health spending —\$168 billion annually— stems from obesity, and that figure will likely double in ten years.

*(Cont.)*

The dramatic U.S. growth in obesity rates has been most pronounced in young adults: In just the past ten years, the number of states experiencing obesity rates over 40 percent among young adults (18-24 year olds) has skyrocketed from one state to 39. This epidemic has resulted not only in health tolls and new economic burdens, but has also contributed to unprecedented numbers of would-be military recruits whose weight makes them unfit to serve.

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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 disease. 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.