



\*\*\*For Immediate Release\*\*\*

April 14, 2011

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

Rebecca Einhorn: (202) 466-8700

## Campaign Applauds Introduction of Safe Routes to School Act

**(WASHINGTON, DC)** The Campaign to End Obesity Action Fund today applauded Senator Tom Harkin, Chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, for introducing the Safe Routes to School Act (S. 800), a needed measure that enables more children to walk and bicycle to school.

The measure is particularly timely as today's children—nearly a third of whom are overweight or obese—experience increasingly sedentary lifestyles. According to the Safe Routes to School Partnership, approximately 50 percent of children walked or bicycled to school in 1969. Today, fewer than 15 percent of schoolchildren walk or bike to school. Meanwhile, a 2010 Kaiser Family Foundation report finds that children ages eight to 18 devote an average of more than 53 hours a week—seven hours and 38 minutes a day—to using entertainment media.

The legislation would enhance the existing Safe Routes to School program—authorized under the 2005 SAFETEA-LU transportation bill—by continuing its funding for five years, improving project delivery, reducing overhead by addressing regulatory burdens and creating a research and evaluation program. Additionally, the legislation would extend opportunities for programmatic funding to high schools—in addition to already eligible middle and elementary schools—echoing a key provision of the 2010 Healthy CHOICES Act, comprehensive obesity prevention and treatment legislation led by Congressman Ron Kind (D-WI).

“Data has shown us that children who are physically inactive not only perform worse academically but have an increased risk for developing obesity and related conditions, including stroke, high blood pressure, diabetes and heart disease,” said Stephanie Silverman, a founding director and senior advisor to the Campaign Action Fund. “Sen. Harkin’s Safe Routes to School Act is to be commended for increasing our children’s physical activity — a critical component in reversing the obesity epidemic.”

###

### **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.*