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For Immediate Release

April 5, 2011

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Obesity Prevention Programs Face Threats in House *Ryan Budget Plan, Energy & Commerce Measure Target Needed Measures to Reign in Long-Term Health Care Spending*

(Washington, DC) Today, the Campaign to End Obesity Action Fund denounced efforts underway in the House of Representatives that would eliminate programs to curb the obesity epidemic. The outcry came as the Energy and Commerce Committee prepares to mark up a measure that would repeal the Prevention and Public Health Fund under the Affordable Care Act and as House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan proposed a FY 2012 budget that would eliminate all funding for the new health care law.

The Prevention and Public Health Fund would enable state and local governments, community organizations and nonprofits to increase healthy food options in schools, create physical activity programs at the community level and incentivize workplace wellness. As a whole, the Affordable Care Act would require insurance companies, for the first time, to provide coverage for obesity screening and nutritional counseling, establish new early childhood nutrition initiatives that engage at-risk communities and create a public awareness campaign on nutrition, exercise and obesity reduction.

Campaign Action Fund leaders reminded policymakers today that programs to help reverse the obesity epidemic at the local level are particularly urgent as a means of reducing the tremendous costs — \$168 billion per year in health expenses alone, and counting — that obesity places on taxpayers. A recent Gallup study of 187 U.S. metro areas found that the direct costs associated with obesity and related chronic conditions are about \$50 million per 100,000 residents annually in cities with the highest rates of obesity. Nationally, obesity-related medical costs have roughly doubled in the last decade, and they stand to double again by 2018, according to a recent McKinsey study.

“Chairman Ryan today called his plan a ‘Path to Prosperity,’ but the measure denies our children a *path to wellness*, at great expense to taxpayers and to their own healthy lives,” said Stephanie Silverman, a founding director and senior advisor to the Campaign Action Fund. “Taking obesity prevention measures off the table would not only fail to balance the budget but guarantee that skyrocketing costs continue to burden our health care system, not to mention our families’ wellbeing.”

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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.