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## **Leading Groups Tell Congress Tax Code Should Target Obesity Prevention, Especially in the Poorest U.S. Communities**

**(Washington, D.C.)** – Today 22 groups, led by the Campaign to End Obesity Action Fund, sent a [letter](#) to the leaders of congressional tax-writing committees urging them to embrace tax policy solutions that can help curb the U.S. obesity epidemic. Groups including the NAACP, American Council on Exercise, National Association of County and City Health Officials, National Hispanic Medical Association and more than a dozen others pressed the leaders of the Senate Finance Committee and House Ways & Means Committee to advance tax incentives to improve access to the kinds of resources – like grocery stores, safe recreational spaces and other infrastructure – needed to bolster healthy living and curb obesity.

With ongoing discussions in Congress about the shape of tax reform needed, the groups urged policymakers to craft needed tax measures that will

- Spur private interests to increase access to healthy, affordable foods in economically disadvantaged communities;
- Yield increased access by these communities to safe recreational spaces;
- Support economically disadvantaged individuals for their efforts to adopt lifestyle choices that are likely to reverse or prevent obesity and other chronic diseases, as well as businesses that invest in tools and resources for these consumers to effect such choices; and
- Be targeted to benefit those individuals and communities most at risk for obesity and other chronic diseases.

Since the U.S. obesity epidemic costs American taxpayers nearly \$200 billion annually in health care expenditures alone, targeted tax policies that curb health care spending through reductions in U.S. obesity rates can generate meaningful long-term savings for the federal budget. All told, there are nearly 100 million Americans with obesity, which affects one in three American adults and one in five children.

“Traditionally, the tax code has been used to incent social and economic outcomes. If one of the single greatest expenses in the U.S. health care budget is the rising cost of obesity, we should consider thoughtful measures that will help the nation address this epidemic and reduce the associated costs to taxpayers,” said Stephanie Silverman, co-founder of the Campaign to End

Obesity Action Fund. “We must begin in the communities where obesity rates are highest, and resources are most scarce. The CEO Action Fund looks forward to working with other thought leaders and tax policymakers in Washington to advance an agenda that serves this urgent economic and health goal.”

According to a December [study](#) by Ernst & Young authored by the former Assistant Treasury Secretary for Tax Analysis, there is one tax program in place – the New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC) – designed to drive infrastructure investment into distressed communities. The NMTC has prompted the creation of some new grocery stores and physical activity facilities in previously underserved neighborhoods. It expired at the end of 2013.

For additional information on the effort or the Campaign to End Obesity Action Fund’s work, please visit [www.obesityactionfund.org](http://www.obesityactionfund.org).

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**About the Campaign to End Obesity Action Fund:**

By bringing together leaders from across industry, academia and public health with policymakers and their advisors, the Campaign to End Obesity Action Fund advocates for policies needed combat obesity and to reverse one of the nation’s costliest and most prevalent diseases.