



## Address the Childhood Obesity Epidemic: Make **ALL** Foods Sold in Schools Healthy

Support HB 1756/SB 1289

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### WHY Should **ALL** Foods Sold and Offered in NC Schools Be Healthy?

**More than 1/3 of NC's Kids Are Overweight or Obese:** Over one-third (33.5%) of North Carolina children and youth age 10-17 are overweight or obese.<sup>1</sup> As a result, North Carolina is ranked 11th in the nation in the number of most overweight and obese children age 10 - 17.<sup>2</sup>

**Kids Eat Nearly Half of Their Calories at School:** A cross-sectional, nationally representative study revealed that children consume up to 47% of their total daily calories from meals and snacks at school.<sup>3</sup>

A student's dietary habits are influenced by their school's food environment,<sup>4</sup> and research shows that limiting children's access to low-nutrient, high calorie foods at school can help control their weight.<sup>5</sup>

**Better Nutrition = Better Grades:** Research has demonstrated a link between healthy foods and better academic performance in schools.<sup>6</sup> Unhealthy body weight in adolescence has also been associated with poorer academic performance<sup>7</sup> and potentially to higher dropout rates.<sup>8</sup>

***Given the growing severity of the childhood obesity epidemic, the proportion of calories consumed by children in the school setting, the link between healthy foods and body weight, and the link between body weight and academic performance, the logical conclusion is that ALL foods sold and offered in schools should be required to be healthy. Appropriate state funding should be provided to make this effort successful.***

### The Health Costs of Obesity Make It Critical that North Carolina Address the Childhood Obesity Epidemic **NOW**.

- The average overweight NC child will accrue \$28,619 in direct medical expenses by the midpoint of his/her career and over \$250,000 in direct health care costs by his/her retirement.<sup>9</sup>
- Overweight adolescents are 70% more likely to grow up and enter NC's workforce as overweight and obese adults.<sup>10</sup> An obese adult will have annual medical costs 37.4% higher than their healthy weight counterparts, representing an additional \$732 per obese person, per year.<sup>11</sup> In addition, an overweight or obese adult will accrue \$250,000 in lost productivity over the course of his or her career.<sup>12</sup>
- According to a 2008 study by Be Active North Carolina, the health care costs of physical inactivity, excess weight and type II diabetes among NC youth in 2006 exceeded \$105 million annually.<sup>13</sup> By 2015, these costs will rise to \$205 million annually.
- If just 3% of North Carolinians moved from overweight or obese to a healthy weight through physical activity and good nutrition, North Carolinians could save three billion dollars between 2007 and 2011. That's enough to fund the UNC system for a year, or pay for 68,000 new jobs.<sup>10</sup>

### HOW Can NC Make **ALL** Foods Sold and Offered in Schools Healthy?

Currently the lunches and breakfasts provided as part of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and National School Breakfast Program (NSBP) are required to meet federal nutrition standards (1995 USDA Dietary Guidelines) which are out dated and have been awaiting update and reauthorization by Congress.

For more information, go to [www.NCAllianceforHealth.org](http://www.NCAllianceforHealth.org) or [www.ncschoolnutrition.com](http://www.ncschoolnutrition.com).  
Contact [ncalliance@heart.org](mailto:ncalliance@heart.org)

State nutrition standards, passed in 2005 but never supported with state funding, are now out of date and weaker than current science-based nutrition standards that govern the sale of competitive foods and beverages sold in schools including, but not limited to, à la carte items, vending, schools stores, fundraisers and other options available to students during the school day.

The Legislative Childhood Obesity Task Force Recommendation #6 requires the State Board of Education (SBE) to adopt updated nutrition standards for all foods sold and offered in schools. The standards must meet current minimum national standards (such as those adopted by the Alliance for Healthier Generation and the National Academy of Sciences Institute of Medicine) for elementary, middle and high schools. The proposal calls for revised standards to be implemented in elementary schools by 2011-2012, in middle schools by 2012-2013, and in high schools by 2013-2014.

The Legislative Childhood Obesity Task Force also recommends that funding to enable implementation of the minimum nutrition standards be provided beginning in 2011 to child nutrition programs in the form of a \$.05 per meal supplement over the first two years of implementation for elementary, middle & high schools, respectively, to offset higher costs of implementation & potential short-term revenue decreases.

**Make the health of NC's children a priority by  
taking a step toward tackling the childhood  
obesity epidemic.**

**Make Every Choice a Healthy Choice.  
Make ALL Foods Sold and Offered in Schools Healthy**

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#### References

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