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## **Campaign Supports Childhood Obesity Awareness Month**

Washington, D.C. (September 13, 2012) – September is here and that means the official end of summer for most children across the United States. Appropriately, it also signifies Childhood Obesity Awareness Month.

More than 23 million children and teenagers in the United States ages 2 to 19 are obese or overweight, a statistic that health and medical experts consider an epidemic, according to research published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. In fact, the rate of childhood obesity more than doubled from 1980 to 2000. Thirty states have child obesity rates of 30 percent or more.

Approximately 50 percent of children walked or bicycled to school in 1969; today, fewer than 15 percent of schoolchildren walk or bike to school. Also, only 3.8 percent of U.S. elementary schools, 7.9 percent of U.S. middle schools and 2.1 percent of U.S. high schools provide daily physical education for students, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children's total entertainment media time not exceed two hours daily. Yet, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation, average kids watch at least twice that much television. They also spend more than an hour per day online and another hour on video games. While no one yet has found any causal link between time spent on 'screen time', pediatricians advocate that children should have at least an hour a day of unstructured play outside (when possible) and break a sweat at least three times a week by getting 20 minutes or more of physical activity.

Yet, preventing obesity during childhood is critical. The *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* reports that an obese 4-year-old has a 20% chance of becoming an obese adult and an obese teenager has up to an 80% chance of becoming an obese adult.

Obesity threatens our health and the nation's security. Childhood Obesity Awareness Month provides an opportunity to tend to our children's health and all of our futures.

To address this threat, the Campaign to End Obesity has long supported policies designed to prevent and treat obesity by:

- Increasing access to healthy lifestyle choices;
- Designating obesity as a disease for clinical purposes; and
- Investing in research and programs designed to reduce and prevent obesity in America

In the last few years, Congress has taken steps to address this challenge. For example, the Affordable Care Act included provisions to invest in prevention and facilitate treatment for obese Americans. Additionally, the Child Nutrition Reauthorization included landmark provisions to improve the nutritional value of foods offered on school campuses. Unfortunately, both of these measures have come under attack in the past year and, with Childhood Obesity Awareness Month upon us, we call on Congress to protect these measures and continue to take action to address obesity in America by recognizing the public health and economic benefits associated with moving America to a healthier weight.

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### **About the Campaign to End Obesity**

By bringing together leaders from across industry, academia and public health with policymakers and their advisors, the Campaign to End Obesity provides the information and guidance that decision-makers need to make the changes necessary to reverse one of the nation's costliest and most prevalent diseases.

For more information about the Campaign's work, visit [www.obesitycampaign.org](http://www.obesitycampaign.org) or call 202-466-8100.