

FRIST, WYDEN TACKLE CHILDHOOD OBESITY WITH LEGISLATION TO EMPOWER KIDS, SCHOOLS

Senators' bill promotes better nutritional choices, more exercise for students in America's elementary and middle schools

June 21st, 2004 - Washington, DC – U.S. Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-Tenn.) and Senator Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) today introduced legislation to address the fast-growing problem of obesity among American youth. The "Childhood Obesity Reduction Act" would encourage school-aged children to increase their physical activity and make better nutritional choices by promoting school and community-based activities to improve children's health.

"Obesity is one of the biggest public health threats facing our next generation," said Frist. "By encouraging physical fitness and healthy eating in schools, we empower children with the tools they need to ebb the tide against the obesity epidemic. This legislation is a critical step toward helping schools and communities improve the health of children across the nation."

"Childhood obesity is a serious problem throughout the nation and in my state, robbing young people of a healthy future and straining our limited federal health dollars," stated Wyden. "This plan will enlist schools in the battle, giving them the resources they need to guide our children toward a lifetime of healthy activity and healthy food choices."



Senator Bill Frist, M.D.

The Childhood Obesity Reduction Act would recognize schools that voluntarily implement plans to increase physical activity and promote healthy nutritional choices. The bill would authorize \$2.2 million in fiscal year 2005 to establish a Congressional Council to Combat Childhood Obesity. The Council would highlight successful programs, develop model nutrition and exercise plans for schools, and coordinate outreach and public awareness efforts. After two years of identifying and selecting model programs, the Council will create a public-private foundation that will award grants to schools that wish to implement model anti-obesity programs.

More than 15 percent of American children and teens ages six through 19 are overweight, nearly four times the percentage in 1960. Being overweight or obese carries increased risks for heart disease, cancer and musculoskeletal disorders, such as osteoarthritis.

Being overweight or obese also increases a child's risk for diabetes, which can lead to a host of chronic illnesses and is the leading cause of kidney disease, heart disease, amputations, and blindness. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that, due to the childhood obesity epidemic, one in three Americans born in the year 2000 will develop diabetes in their lifetime. Among African American and Hispanic children, that number jumps to nearly half.

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