

November 30, 2009

The Honorable Mark Udall
U.S. Senate
317 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Udall:

The undersigned organizations would like to thank you for your commitment to obesity prevention. In particular, we would like to commend your proposed amendment to the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (H.R. 3590), an amendment that would establish a pilot program to reduce the increasing prevalence of overweight and obesity among children from birth through five years of age in child care settings.

As you know, approximately 23 million children are obese or overweight. Preschool years are a critical time for determining whether or not an individual will become obese later in life, as lifelong food preferences, eating habits and activity levels develop early in childhood. To address childhood obesity, we must reach children in the settings in which they spend a good deal of time. The 2001 National Household Education Survey found that 74 percent of children in the United States ages three through six are in some form of non-parental care, and 56 percent are in center-based child care. Clearly, the childcare environment is an important setting that can help reduce childhood obesity, and we commend your focus on this area.

We are pleased that your pilot proposal would provide staff at childcare centers and family childcare homes with the opportunity to receive appropriate training so that they can implement practice, policy and curricula changes that will promote healthy eating, physical activity, and appropriate screen time limits. We commend the pilot's inclusion of parental involvement strategies to reinforce positive nutrition and physical activity behaviors, as well as the focus on evidence-based and data-informed programs and practices. In addition, the evaluation and dissemination components will help ensure that best practices and lessons learned from the pilot program will be shared so that they can be replicated in other settings.

Mitigating our nation's obesity epidemic will require comprehensive strategies aimed at improving nutrition and physical activity and will necessitate partnerships among all sectors of society. This amendment is an important step in the right direction. Again, we want to commend your leadership and thank you for your work on this very important amendment. We look forward to working with you on this and other important initiatives in the future.

Sincerely,

Nemours
Trust for America's Health
YMCA of the USA