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Ohio Ramps Up Efforts to Fight Childhood Obesity

January 13, 2010

COLUMBUS, Ohio - Support is building for legislation that could position Ohio as a national leader in fighting the growing health-related concerns of childhood obesity. The U.S. House and Senate are considering the "Healthy Choices for Healthy Children" bill, which would enlist schools to help kids make healthier food choices and stay physically active.

Melissa Bacon, the director of advocacy and public policy with the *Ohio Children's Hospital Association*, says one in three Ohio children is overweight by age eight, so early intervention is essential.

"The goal is to start earlier in teaching them about healthy lifestyles and the importance of being physically active."

The legislation includes requirements for availability of nutritious food at schools, for a greater focus on physical activity, and for measuring and reporting progress.

Schools would be required to provide 30 minutes of physical activity daily for children in grades K-12 as well as to offer more nutritious choices in cafeterias and vending machines. Bacon says these would help Ohio children to become healthy adults, which saves everyone money in the long run.

"We have to make this a priority, so our future health care costs can be lowered. Obesity is a very important health issue, and we need to get to work and start combating it now."

Among the 50 states, Ohio is currently tied for tenth place in terms of obesity. A recent study from the Partnership to Fight Chronic Disease found that, if current trends continue, more than 50 percent of adults in Ohio will be obese by 2018.

Mary Kuhlman, Public News Service - OH

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