



LOUISIANA COUNCIL ON OBESITY PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT

December 20, 2011

The Honorable Bobby Jindal
Governor, State of Louisiana
P.O. Box 94004, Capitol Station
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-4404

The Honorable Joel T. Chaisson, II, President
Louisiana State Senate
P.O. Box 94183, Capitol Station
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9183

The Honorable Jim Tucker, Speaker
Louisiana State House of Representatives
P.O. Box 94062, Capitol Station
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9062

President Penny Dastugue
Board of Elementary & Secondary Education
P.O. Box 94183, Capitol Station
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9064

The Honorable Kay Katz, Chairwoman
House Health and Welfare Committee
Louisiana State House of Representatives
P.O. Box 44486, Capitol Station
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-4486

The Honorable Willie Mount, Chairwoman
Senate Health and Welfare Committee
Louisiana State Senate
P.O. Box 94183, Capitol Station
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9183

The Honorable Austin Badon, Chairman
House Education Committee
Louisiana State House of Representatives
P.O. Box 4486, Capitol Station
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-4486

The Honorable Ben Nevers, Chairman
Senate Education Committee
Louisiana State Senate
P.O. Box 94183, Capitol Station
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9183

Dear Governor Jindal, President Chaisson, Speaker Tucker, President Dastugue, and Honorable Chairs:

In response to Act 256 of the 2009 Regular Session, the Louisiana Council on Obesity Prevention and Management (Louisiana Obesity Council) submits this letter. Act 256 requests the Louisiana Obesity Council within the Department of Health and Hospitals work in consultation with the Department of Education, the Cecil J. Picard Center for Child Development at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, and the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports to review the health-related physical fitness assessment program and make annual recommendations to the Governor, the House and Senate committees on health and welfare and education, and BESE regarding childhood obesity best practices, interventions, and future directions.

The problem of childhood obesity in the United States has grown considerably in recent years. The Picard Center's reported fitness level results for 2010-2011 indicated that 39% of Louisiana's public school students have an overweight or obese body composition. Only 36% of students met the minimum standards on the fitness assessment.



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On behalf of the Louisiana Obesity Council, DOE, the Picard Center and the Governor's council on Physical Fitness & Sports, I would like to stress that obesity is a major concern for Louisiana's youth and we recognize the importance of taking action to ensure this problem is addressed. Based on the 2011 Act 256 Report, we collectively recommend the following:

- Expansion of the surveillance of students across Louisiana through the health-related physical fitness assessments. The Picard Center currently gathers information in 18 school districts. We recommend expansion to all Louisiana school districts through an Amendment of Act 256.
- Because the State would benefit from having BMI data on all children, we recommend collecting height and weight data in the Louisiana Immunization Network for Kids Statewide (LINKS) each time a child receives an immunization. .
- Recommend examining school district monies expended for health purposes as state matching funds from Medicaid to increase funding for coordinated school health programs.

There is much to be done to combat and prevent childhood obesity here in Louisiana. The Louisiana Obesity Council members and partners remain committed towards this effort. Please contact Pamela Romero, Council Coordinator (225-342-7901), should you have questions or concerns as we continue to work together to improve the health of Louisiana's children.

Respectfully submitted,

Stewart T. Gordon, MD, FAAP
Chair, Louisiana Obesity Council