



Kearney, Coughlin introduce bill to fight childhood obesity

By Health Desk, Call & Post

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COLUMBUS – State Sens. Eric H. Kearney, D-Cincinnati, and Kevin Coughlin, R-Cuyahoga Falls, introduced Senate Bill 210 to enlist Ohio’s schools in combating the childhood obesity epidemic.

“Now is the time for Ohio to move forward with a comprehensive plan to address childhood obesity in our schools,” Kearney stated in testimony before the Senate Health and Human Services Committee today. “Failure to address obesity at an early age will lead to lifelong health issues and will come at enormous expense.”

One in three Ohio kids is overweight or obese by the age of eight. The Ohio Family Health Survey 2008 found that childhood obesity is a major public health threat that impacts every demographic group in every corner of the state.

The legislation:

- Builds physical activity into the daily school routine by requiring 30 minutes of moderate activity.
- Makes physical education a key component to get kids moving. The bill increases physical education requirements for high school students, requires licensure and certification of physical education teachers, and stipulates that performance results must be posted on state report cards.
- Requires B.M.I measurements as the student ages. The simple height and weight calculation will be determined upon school entry, and in grades three, five and nine. Parents will be informed of results on a confidential basis.
- Ensures that children have access to nutritious foods in a school setting. The bill allows for all schools to provide a free breakfast to all who are eligible. It also sets standards for food and beverages offered through vending machines and a la carte.

The bipartisan bill includes support from the Ohio Business Roundtable, the Ohio Children’s Hospital Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center, Center for Closing the Health Gap, American Heart Association, American Stroke Association, Children’s Hunger Alliance, Health Policy Institute of Ohio, Ohio Action for Health Kids, Ohio Soft Drink Association, and many others.

“Childhood obesity is the most profound long-term public health challenge in this state,” stated Ohio Business Roundtable president Richard Stoff. “The Senate’s bipartisan commitment to combat this crisis – led by senators Kearney and Coughlin – properly focuses attention on the setting where children spend the bulk of their time outside the home and where we know we can have an immediate