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Proposed laws aimed at fixing childhood obesity

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By Marie Rossiter, Staff Writer

Updated 8:19 AM Monday, February 22, 2010

BUTLER COUNTY — A pair of legislative bills could bring about major overhauls to schools' physical education and food programs if they become law.

Senate Bill 210, House Bill 60 are being considered by the Ohio General Assembly target the growing problem of childhood obesity. At least one in three young people are diagnosed as overweight, according to the Centers for Disease Prevention and Control—a number has tripled over the past 30 years.

S.B. 210 and H.B. 373 were introduced simultaneously last fall and focus on monitoring student health, providing healthier food choices and increasing the amount of physical activity. Both bills call for 30 minutes of moderate physical activity during the school day, an increase physical education requirements for high school students from one-half unit to one full unit, more nutritious foods and beverages in vending machines, a la carte menus and other school-operated venues and required body mass index screenings upon school entry and in third, fifth and ninth grade.

Melissa Bacon, director of public policy for the Ohio Children's Hospital Association, said the legislation was one piece of a larger healthy lifestyle program following a study by the Ohio Business Roundtable.

"The thought behind the council's findings was to find ways to reduce high health care costs," Bacon said. "Obesity was one of the largest factors, and so we got together with interested partners and focused on this issue." But, some health officials have concerns about how the new law would be implemented or enforced.

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“We oppose the regulation of BMI,” said Dr. Laurie Mitan, a pediatrician who specializes in adolescents and eating disorders. “The BMI number doesn’t tell the whole story at all. Screenings like this need to be done in the context of a medical professional. Parents need to be given guidelines and may not understand what these numbers mean.”

Middletown City Schools has provided parents with student BMI information since the 2006-2007 school year, according to Student Services Director Susan Combs.

“We feel this is important information for parents to have,” Combs said. “There were some privacy concerns from parents at first, but once we assured them they would be the only ones getting this information, they’ve been more supportive.”

Combs said parents receive a letter with the screening results, along with recommendations to consult their family doctor if the student’s results indicate a weight problem.

Legislative advocates said education is key to combating childhood obesity, which is why it is a main focus of the bills.

“We would send home materials to help guide parents on how they can help their child,” Bacon said. “We see this as a community effort, not just a school effort.”

Contact this reporter at (513) 696-4542 or mrossiter@coxohio.com.

Legislation highlights

All schools must provide 30 minutes of moderate to rigorous physical activity

All high school students must earn one full unit in physical education

All PE teachers must be licensed and certified to teach physical education

A possibility of making PE a performance indicator on state performance report cards

All schools are allowed to provide a free breakfast to all children eligible for free or reduced-price breakfast.

All schools must offer more nutritious foods and beverages during the regular and extended school days in vending machines, a la carte menus and other school operated venues

All districts must perform BMI screenings upon school entry, third grade, fifth grade and ninth grade

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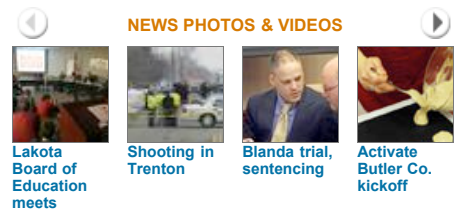


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I am continuously puzzled at how anyone thinks that parents, let alone schools, can "make" a kid eat healthy food, or any food for that matter. You know, eating is a matter of "taste." I would love to know how you can "make" a kid eat what you want him/her to eat. The kid will throw anything not wanted in the trash. Now, it is true that the food thrown away may be healthier, but the kid's stomach will be growling. Until most of society shuns junk food, things aren't going to change.



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DLSE
8:10 PM, 2/22/2010

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Well there go more of my tax dollars down the toilet. When I went to school, gym or what is now known as P.E. was a requirement that must be passed in order to graduate. This went away because phat phukz got hit with a ball or had to run.

So the state uses my tax dollars to fatten up these phukz by service junk food for school lunch's and taking away P.E. Now the state is going to spend more of my tax dollars to make these same over weight fat phukz get some exercise?

Barry
4:59 PM, 2/22/2010

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"There's no way to rule innocent men. The only power government has is the power to crack down on criminals. Well, when there aren't enough criminals, one makes them. One declares so many things to be a crime that it becomes impossible for men to live without breaking laws."
Ayn Rand, from "Atlas Shrugged"

John Gault
2:09 PM, 2/22/2010

[REPORT ABUSE](#)

Ban the junk food. Offer one lunch (and make it nutritious). Stop making our schools into restaurants. We cannot change what happens outside of the school, but we don't have to continue to pay for enabling inside the schools. And, it would also cost less than what they are doing now.

Any common sense left here ?
11:25 AM, 2/22/2010

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You will change your underwear twice daily and it will be worn on the outside! When the government has nothing better to do then moniter weight, we have a problem. Is this a smoke and mirrors way to show us that our elected officials are really working. Hah-hah. Come on Gov. We have real problems that the legislature need to be working on, like JOBS!!!!

gerald wood
10:41 AM, 2/22/2010

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