

Today's kids need healthy choices bill

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Rep. John Carney, D-Columbus, said it best: “Obesity is the number one preventable health crisis in America.”

In other words, we don't have to be fat. But during a time when our children are playing more video games than ever, spending more time inside than ever, and even the active children are eating an alarming amount of high-fat fast food, we're raising a generation of overweight children.

Call them Generation XXL.

To combat this dilemma, Carney, along with fellow Ohio lawmakers, recently announced The Healthy Choices for Healthy Children legislation that has been approved by both chambers of the state legislature.

The bill aims to prevent childhood obesity and promote healthy lifestyle choices for students across the state. We can't be healthy adults if we're not healthy children first. And considering Ohio ranks 10th in the nation for having the fattest adults, we better get started quickly.

The legislation was supported by a coalition of business, health care, child advocacy and education leaders from across the state — the Healthy Choices for Healthy Children coalition.

The bill takes a simple, yet, we believe, effective approach toward decreasing and preventing childhood obesity in Ohio schools.

Some of the points include:

- Healthier á la carte and vending food and beverage options.
- Body Mass Index (BMI) screenings upon school entry and in third, fifth and ninth grades, with a parental opt-out and a waiver option for schools that may be unable to comply.
- A pilot program to encourage 30 minutes of daily physical activity for students, with special recognition for participating districts on the district's report card.
- Creation of a council of experts to guide implementation of the legislation in the long term.

Sen. Kevin Coughlin, R-Cuyahoga Falls, who co-sponsored the legislation with Senator Eric H. Kearney, D-Cincinnati, said the state is “facing an epidemic” since one in three children born in Ohio is overweight by his or her eighth birthday.

He hopes the legislation will help Ohio become “a national leader” in addressing childhood obesity through these solutions.

This legislation comes on the heels of first lady Michelle Obama launching a “Let's Move” campaign to

promote physical fitness and weight control among our young people.

We encourage Gov. Ted Strickland to sign the Healthy Choices for Healthy Children legislation into law.

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