



## **News for Immediate Release**

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### **State Board of Education Approves New Nutrition and Activity Regulations for Schools**

**Harrisburg** – The State Board of Education today advanced proposed student nutrition and physical activity standards that would make Pennsylvania’s response to the growing obesity epidemic one of the nation’s strongest.

“Today’s schoolchildren are part of what may be the first generation with a shorter life expectancy than its predecessor’s,” said State Board Chair Joe Torsella.

“Getting junk foods out of our schools – and getting healthier food options and 30 minutes of daily physical activity into them – are simple steps that can have a tremendous impact for our young people.”

The Board’s regulations would set baseline nutritional standards for foods provided outside reimbursable school meals, including items dispensed from school vending machines and sold through fundraisers. Torsella noted that the regulation takes a “common sense” approach by exempting homemade and home-baked goods from the requirements while providing schools with “important flexibility to ensure successful integration of the standards with local food service programs.”

“These comprehensive standards will not only curb childhood obesity but are good for all students to ensure they get the proper nutrition and enough exercise to develop strong bones, healthy hearts and sharp minds,” said Secretary of Health Everette James. “Schools play a crucial role in the health of our children.”

The regulation also requires 30 minutes of daily physical activity for every student, while giving schools broad discretion in implementation. Students could satisfy requirements through physical education classes, recess, classroom “energizers” or curriculum-based physical activity.

“The research is clear: young people need at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day,” said Torsella. “With children spending nearly one-third to one-half of their waking hours in school each day, we have an obligation to meet them halfway on a critical public health goal.”

Presented with mounting evidence linking student health to academic outcomes, in 2009 the Board identified nutrition and physical activity as policy priorities and formed a standing committee to examine best practices nationally and develop a state-level response. Committee chair Corrinne Caldwell, Ph.D., expressed “sincere

thanks to the stakeholders who contributed so much to this process and this important step forward.”

In all, more than 150 stakeholders participated in a series of five public roundtables aimed at gathering input on the regulation.

The backdrop to the Board’s action is unprecedented public awareness and activism on the need to curb rising child obesity rates. According to the state Department of Health, one-third of all Pennsylvania students are overweight or obese, with even higher rates in 43 of 67 counties statewide.

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