



RON ROBERTS
CHAIRMAN
SUPERVISOR, FOURTH DISTRICT
SAN DIEGO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

AGENDA ITEM

DATE: June 12, 2007

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT: PROMOTING HEALTHY EATING HABITS (DISTRICT: ALL)

SUMMARY:

Overview:

Obesity is a growing epidemic with significant health, social and economic implications. This board letter includes recommendations that will help us reverse this disturbing trend.

Recommendation(s):

CHAIRMAN ROBERTS

1. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to incorporate the following principles into the County's legislative agenda as it pertains to obesity and nutrition:
 - a.) Prohibit the use of public food benefits to purchase items that have high sugar content and no nutritional value, and incentivize the purchase of healthy foods like fresh fruits and vegetables.
 - b.) Combine nutrition education with efforts related to local food assistance programs, especially those that target families with obese children or children who are at risk of becoming obese.
 - c.) Increase federal and state resources for outreach efforts and improve business efficiency of locally administered food and nutrition assistance programs.
2. Authorize the Director of the County's Health and Human Services Agency to pursue grant opportunities and pilot programs consistent with the above recommendations.

Fiscal Impact:

There is no fiscal impact associated with approving these recommendations.

Business Impact Statement:

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N/A

Advisory Board Statement:

N/A

BACKGROUND:

Obesity is a growing epidemic with significant health, social and economic implications.

Sadly, the number of overweight Americans has increased almost 50 percent during the last 15 years – that represents two-thirds of our population. These individuals are at risk of a wide array of health complications, including cardiovascular, orthopedic, diabetic and pulmonary ailments. Those who are overweight and obese are also found to miss more days of work and are more likely to be admitted into a hospital. Additionally, the amount spent by California on direct and indirect medical care, workers' compensation, and lost productivity topped \$28 billion in 2005.

Obesity among children is also on the rise. In fact, more than one-in-four students in San Diego County is now overweight or obese. If we don't act now, one-third of our children could develop diabetes at some point in their lifetimes, and we could soon see the first generation of children in history with a life expectancy shorter than that of their parents. Further, obese children miss more school days and have lower academic performance than other children.

Over the past several years, reducing childhood obesity has been one of my top priorities. In 2002, we created the Coalition on Children and Weight (Coalition), made up of more than 100 organizations that are committed to the health and well being of San Diego County's children. Last year, through the efforts of Supervisor Pam Slater-Price, myself, the Coalition and others, our Board adopted the *Call to Action: San Diego County Childhood Obesity Action Plan* (Action Plan). Today, our County has a thriving Childhood Obesity Initiative, which is working to implement the strategies identified in our Action Plan.

Statistics show that obesity is more prevalent in low-income households. In 2005, a San Diego study found that 27.9% of men, women and children had difficulty meeting their basic nutritional needs due to financial constraints.

And, of course, one of the leading causes of obesity is poor nutrition.

Altering nutritional habits is partly predicated on having access to healthy foods. The reality is children and families living in poverty often reside in neighborhoods with an abundance of convenience and liquor stores and a lack of grocery stores. Grocery stores typically have a greater selection of fresh foods and are less expensive than smaller outlets.

These families often purchase foods that cost less, are easier to preserve, and will curb their hunger to a greater degree. Subsequently, these types of foods have less nutritional value.

As cited in our Action Plan, there are many sectors of society that will need to implement new strategies and influence behavior change in order for us to be successful in diminishing obesity. The sectors include government, healthcare systems and providers, schools, businesses,

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marketing industry and parents and families. As a government body we have influence on the nutrition arena through programs that the County administers, including the Senior Brown Bag program, Senior Dining Centers, MOMEals and the Food Stamp programs, all funded by the federal government. Through these programs we have the chance to enhance food resources for vulnerable populations and also have the opportunity to educate them about how to buy and prepare healthy food as well as discouraging unhealthy choices.

The reauthorization of the federal Farm Bill, which governs the Food Stamp program and other nutritional programs, is currently underway on Capitol Hill. This presents us with an opportunity to enhance the nutritional habits of those who receive this benefit, and I believe that San Diego County should voice its support for a number of measures. These measures include prohibiting the use of public food benefits to purchase items with no nutritional value and high sugar content; incentivizing the purchase of healthy foods like fresh fruit and vegetables; combining nutrition education with efforts related to local food assistance programs; and increasing resources for outreach efforts and improving business efficiency of food assistance programs.

To this end, I am asking our Board to adopt policy guidelines that will allow the County's Health and Human Services Agency to support legislation that increases nutrition resources and education for our most vulnerable citizens, including seniors, people with disabilities, and especially families with children who are at risk of obesity.

Respectfully submitted,

RON ROBERTS
Chairman
Supervisor, Fourth District

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AGENDA ITEM INFORMATION SHEET

CONCURRENCE(S)

COUNTY COUNSEL REVIEW	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	
Written Disclosure per County Charter Section 1000.1 Required	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
GROUP/AGENCY FINANCE DIRECTOR	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Requires Four Votes	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
GROUP/AGENCY INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY DIRECTOR	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A
COUNTY TECHNOLOGY OFFICE	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A

Other Concurrence(s): N/A

ORIGINATING DEPARTMENT: Fourth Supervisorial District

CONTACT PERSON(S):

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AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE: _____