



*Making the right food choices, together.*

January 26, 2009

Dear members of the Senate Education Committee,

I am writing you to urge you to support SB 09-46, the bill to promote healthy snacks in public and charter schools in Colorado. I am sorry that I am unable to attend the committee hearing in person this week. However, in lieu of being there in person, I wanted to write to offer my strong endorsement of SB 09-46 by Senator Sandoval.

Basically, America is getting fatter, including the state of Colorado. A fatter America costs us more.

- ❖ Proper Nutrition and Proper levels of Physical Activity improve academic performance.
- ❖ An estimated 61% of overweight young people have at least one additional risk factor for heart disease, such as high cholesterol or high blood pressure.<sup>1</sup>
- ❖ Childhood obesity also is associated with social and psychological problems, such as discrimination and poor self esteem.<sup>2,3</sup>
- ❖ Children and adolescents who are overweight are more likely to become overweight or obese adults.<sup>4</sup>
- ❖ Type 2 diabetes, osteoarthritis, stroke, some types of cancer, premature death, and many other health problems are associated with obesity.<sup>5</sup>
- ❖ In 2000, the total cost of obesity (including medical costs and the value of wages lost by employees unable to work because of illness, disability, or premature death) in the US was approximately **\$117 billion**.<sup>6</sup>
  - ❖ It costs more in increased healthcare premiums.
  - ❖ It costs us more in lost days for our employees.

I do not believe in socialized programs, over legislation, or massive regulation. I believe in accountability, self-responsibility, and the free market. However in the absence of any systems to empower our children with knowledge about the risks of a sedentary lifestyle and poor eating habits, we need "something" in place to protect our kids from becoming obese adults. Since we are not proactive in our education of children in this area, we must be reactive and have laws to protect our children. We're fighting the trillions of advertising dollars on Madison Avenue here.

That is what all of these requests for laws regarding meal programs in Colorado are; the "little people who care" asking big people (who also care and make far-reaching decisions) to create "obstacles to obesity." These are in the form of laws since the State does not value "teaching our children" the important message about wellness in Colorado school classrooms. It is obvious that it is not working at the local level. Let's be proactive instead of reactive. Let's empower our children with knowledge so they can make good decisions. I'm sure the results will be better.

Colorado Springs District #11 has made many improvements at the local level in "nutrition" in the last several years. We have made the switch to healthier beverages and snacks and have seen a 40-50% drop in sales of A la Carte items. However, we have seen a huge surge in reimbursable "full" meal sales and have been able to increase our total revenue as students and parents are seeing the quality improvements. These full meals are more nutritious, often containing whole grains, with fresh fruits and vegetables, a highly nutritive beverage called "milk", and meet the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. They are also a better value for students.

I'm asking for your help in protecting our children with support of this bill as a temporary stop-gap. More importantly, I'm asking for your support and assistance in impacting the state education systems so that we can empower our children with knowledge.

I am aware that the legislature passed and the State Board of Education promulgated rules last year removing sodas from the vending machines in the schools. That was a good and important first step. SB 46 is a follow up to that and I urge you to support the legislation.

Thank you for all of the hard work you do for the state of Colorado. Please feel free to be in touch with any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rick H. Hughes", with a stylized, cursive script.

Rick H. Hughes  
Colorado School Nutrition Association  
Industry Chair

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Reference:

1. David S. Freedman, William H. Dietz, Sathanur R. Srinivasan, and Gerald S. Berenson, "The Relation of Overweight to Cardiovascular Risk Factors Among Children and Adolescents: The Bogalusa Heart Study," *Pediatrics* 103, no 6 (1999): 1175:1182.
2. William H. Dietz, "Health Consequences of Obesity in Youth: Childhood Predictors of Adult Disease," *Pediatrics* 101, Supplement (1998): 518-525.
3. Richard S. Strauss, "Childhood Obesity and Self Esteem," *Pediatrics* 105, no. 1 (2000), available online at: [www.pediatrics.org/cgi/content/full/105/1/e15](http://www.pediatrics.org/cgi/content/full/105/1/e15)
4. US Department of Health and Human Services, The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent and Decrease Overweight and Obesity.
5. Ibid
6. Ibid