



American Heart Association testimony in support of SB 2083, “Relating to After-School Programs”

The American Heart Association supports SB 2083 as a step forward toward providing greater resources to prevent obesity in Hawaii’s keiki.

Childhood obesity is a U.S. epidemic. Hawaii youths are not immune, falling at or near the national average of childhood obesity statistics, and the trend for Hawaii’s youths is unfortunately climbing. More focus is needed to improve and instill both healthy nutrition and physical activity lifestyle habits in Hawaii youths. Currently, physical education is not required for Hawaii middle schools, and only one semester is required in high schools. If healthy lifestyle habits are not established at young ages, it is very difficult to change unhealthy habits in later ages.

The burden of cardiovascular disease is now growing faster than our ability to combat it due to the obesity epidemic, poor diet, high blood pressure and a dramatic rise in Type 2 diabetes – all major risk factors for heart disease and stroke. In a frightening reversal, the overall decline in CVD mortality rates have flattened to less than 1 percent per year since 2011, and rates have even worsened for our most at-risk populations. In 2015, the death rate from heart disease actually increased by 1 percent for the first time since 1969, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) National Center for Health Statistics.

In addition, CVD has become our nation’s costliest chronic disease. In 2014, stroke and heart failure were the most expensive chronic conditions in the Medicare fee-for-service program. Expenses associated with CVD are expected to soar in the coming years and surpass medical cost estimates for other chronic diseases, such as diabetes and Alzheimer’s. Based on prevalence, death rates, disability and cost, CVD will continue to be the most burdensome disease Americans will face in the next decades.

The costs of obesity, which is rooted in lifestyle habits established at younger ages, is staggering, **costing \$190 billion a year in weight-related medical bills**, according to the American Heart Association. In 2011, the CDC estimated that healthcare costs exceed \$8,600 annually (per capita). Another study estimated that medical spending attributable to obesity was estimated to be more than \$1400 higher than normal weight individuals.

The AHA supports SB 2083 as one step to address Hawaii’s childhood obesity epidemic.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of SB 2083.

Respectfully submitted,

Don Weisman
Hawaii Government Relations/Communications Director

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free of cardiovascular
diseases and stroke.”*

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