



July 31, 2007

The Honorable Ron Kind
1406 Longworth HOB
Washington., DC 20515

The Honorable Zach Wamp
1436 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jay Inslee
403 Cannon HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Kind, Wamp and Inslee:

The American Heart Association and the National Association for Sport and Physical Education strongly endorse the Fitness Integrated with Teaching (FIT) Kids Act of 2007. If enacted, this legislation would help reduce the current alarming levels of childhood obesity by encouraging schools to provide quality physical education for students through the twelfth grade, and encouraging life-long healthy habits.

Childhood obesity in the United States has reached truly epidemic proportions. The Department of Health and Human Services projects that 20 percent of children and youth in the U.S. will be obese by 2010. And the health consequences are tragic. Overweight adolescents have a 70 percent chance of becoming overweight adults, increasing their risk for chronic disease, disability and death. Of all U.S. deaths from major chronic disease, 23 percent are linked to sedentary lifestyles that now begin at childhood.

Although obesity has many causes, researchers suggest that the childhood obesity epidemic is in part due to a steep decline in regular physical activity. Experts surveyed by the GAO agree that increasing physical activity is the most important component of any program to combat childhood obesity. Consistent with this, a 2005 report from the Institute of Medicine (*Preventing Childhood Obesity: Health in the Balance*, National Academies Press, Washington, DC) recommends that schools should provide children with at least 30 minutes of physical activity during the school day.

Sadly, many schools are cutting back on physical education programs. However, a lack of regular physical activity can also compromise a child's academic, social and emotional development. Evidence suggests that healthy, physically-fit children learn more effectively and achieve more academically. Moreover, if the lessons of a healthy lifestyle are not taught in physical education classes, children are at a higher risk of making poor choices, such as smoking and eating fatty foods.

We believe that the FIT Kids Act can make a real and meaningful difference in the fight against childhood obesity without overburdening schools, districts and states. Through its multi-faceted approach that includes accountability, reporting requirements, research and support of children

and teachers, there is an unprecedented opportunity to start to bring this epidemic under control. We thank you for your leadership and look forward to helping you advance this vitally important legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Daniel W. Jones". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line at the end.

Daniel W. Jones, MD, FAHA
President, American Heart Association

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Craig Buschner". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Craig Buschner, Ed. D
President, National Association for
Sport and Physical Education