



Osteopathic Heritage Foundation  
Osteopathic Heritage Foundation *of* Nelsonville

1500 Lake Shore Drive, Suite 230  
Columbus, Ohio 43204-3800

P. (614) 737-4370 Toll-free (866) 737-4370  
F. (614) 737-4371

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[heritage@ohf-ohio.org](mailto:heritage@ohf-ohio.org)  
[www.osteopathicheritage.org](http://www.osteopathicheritage.org)

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To: Chairman Coughlin  
Members of the Health, Human Services and Aging Committee

From: Terri Donlin Huesman, Director of Programs, Osteopathic Heritage Foundation

Subject: Senate Bill 210, Healthy Choices for Healthy Children

Chairman Coughlin, members of the committee, good afternoon. Thank you for this opportunity to testify with regard to Senate Bill 210: Healthy Behaviors that is before you.

I am Terri Donlin Huesman, Director of Programs, for the Osteopathic Heritage Foundation. As a private grantmaking foundation, the Osteopathic Heritage Foundation invests in community solutions designed to improve the health and quality of life in central and southeastern Ohio through education, research and service consistent with principles of osteopathic medicine. Over the past ten years, the Foundation has approved over \$110 million designed to improve community health, including obesity prevention, for vulnerable populations and to advance patient care through support of osteopathic medical education and research.

Childhood obesity trends are not improving – today one in three children in Ohio are overweight by the age of eight, and children who are obese when they are 10 years old have an 80 percent chance of being obese as an adult. Furthermore, if current trends continue 50 percent of Ohioans will be obese by 2018.

That is why, since 2005, the Foundation has invested over \$4.4 million in obesity efforts, including support to 24 local school districts in central and southeastern Ohio – to create sustainable change designed to prevent and reduce childhood obesity, including:

1. Organizing and coordinating district wide wellness councils;
2. Increasing access to and opportunities for physical activity;
3. Improving the quality of school nutrition standards;
4. Standardizing data collection and analysis of body mass index and weight status.

As a result of the Foundation's strategic grantmaking in local school districts, sustainable and transformational district wide changes have occurred.

For example, in Franklin County, Columbus City Schools is a leader and model for large urban districts related to coordinated wellness efforts. Over the past five years, district achievements have been significant, and include:

- ✓ A sustainable and on-going Wellness Initiative through the districts School Health Advisory Council, with support from Superintendent & CEO Dr. Gene Harris, dedicated to health and wellness issues within the district.
- ✓ Transition to water-only vending in student accessed machines. A groundbreaking accomplishment for the largest district in the state of Ohio.
- ✓ Expansion of body mass index screenings, including communication of results, referrals and related health information to parents and students.
- ✓ In collaboration with Nationwide Children's Hospital, Columbus City Schools has expanded a successful fitness and nutrition program, entitled FAN (Fitness and Nutrition Club).

In southeastern Ohio, schools districts are creating access to physical activity through the development of new walking trails and school based fitness centers – many are the first of their kind in the county. For example, the Vinton Local School District has developed and sustained a school based fitness center which is accessed by students, district staff and the community at-large. Southern Local in Meigs County and Morgan Local School District have created new walking trails for students, staff and the community.

These are just a few examples of existing efforts designed to prevent and reduce childhood obesity. School districts provide an excellent opportunity to positively influence the health and wellness of children, and can contribute to Ohio's response and reversal of the alarming obesity trends. We encourage the Ohio legislature to provide support and assistance to school districts in addressing the trends in school age obesity.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to appear before your committee today. I would be happy to answer questions that the committee members may have.