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Testimony Re: S-304 An Act Relating to Education – Health and Safety of Pupils

Senate Education Committee

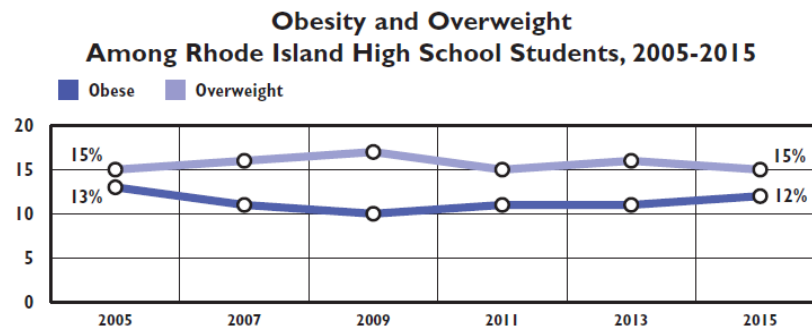
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Madame Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony today. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT supports Senate Bill 304 which would prohibit the advertising of unhealthy food and beverages on any school campus for items that cannot be sold during the school day in accordance with state and federal school nutrition standards.

Obesity Among Rhode Island High School Students

In Rhode Island in 2015, 12% of high school students reported being obese and 15% reported being overweight. Hispanic students (19%), males (16%), and Black, non-Hispanic students (15%) were more likely to report being obese compared to their White, non-Hispanic (10%) and female (8%) high school peers. Rhode Island's overall high school obesity and overweight prevalence has not significantly improved or worsened since 2005.¹



Source: *Youth Risk Behavior Survey*, Rhode Island, 2005-2015. BMI calculated using self-reported student response.

Advertising is a Risk Factor for Childhood Obesity

In 2006, the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies concluded that food marketing is a risk factor for unhealthy diets and contributes to childhood obesity. In addition, the American Academy of Pediatrics in 2011 stated that available research results clearly indicate that advertising is effective in getting younger children to request more high-fat/low nutrition food and to influence their parents.

Many Rhode Island Schools Restrict Unhealthy Advertisements

In 2016, a majority of Rhode Island middle and high school administrators reported voluntarily prohibiting unhealthy food and beverage advertisements in school buildings (82%), in school publications (81%), on school grounds (79%), on school buses (79%), and in other educational materials (77%).²

Benefits of this Legislation

This important piece of legislation would further build upon this progress by helping to ensure all school environments promote healthy food choices that reinforce health and nutrition education. With your leadership and action, we can ensure that every Rhode Island school is a safe and healthy place for learning and growing.

We urge you to support this bill and thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today.

References

1 *Youth Risk Behavior Survey*, Rhode Island, 2005-2015

2 Data are from the *Rhode Island Department of Education, School Health Profiles Report, 2016*.