



# ALASKA PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION

Committed To Advancing Alaska's Public Health Since 1978

## ALPHA RESOLUTION 9-2008

### Urging State Financial Support for an Obesity Prevention and Control Program

**Sponsor: Brian Saylor, PhD, MPH**

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Learning that world health experts are predicting that this generation of children will be the first to live shorter lives than their parents due to obesity<sup>i</sup>, and

Knowing that obesity is a health threat to all generations of Alaskans; it increases the risks of chronic diseases and conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, stroke, hypertension, some cancers and premature death.<sup>ii</sup>, and

Concerned that, more than one-fourth of Alaska high school students are overweight or obese<sup>iii</sup>, while one-third of children entering kindergarten in Alaska's largest school district were already overweight or obese<sup>iv</sup>. and , two-thirds of Alaskan adults are considered overweight or obese<sup>v</sup> and

Believing that reducing and preventing childhood and adult obesity will lead not only to more productive lives, it will annually save Alaskans \$195 million and save Medicare/Medicaid \$46 million in obesity-related direct medical expenditures<sup>vi</sup> and

Finding that, in 2005 obesity prevention stakeholders from state, municipal, educational, tribal and community health organizations collectively developed Alaskan specific strategies to prevent and reduce obesity that are published in the statewide Obesity Prevention and Control plan, *Alaska in Action: the Statewide Physical Activity and Nutrition Plan and*

Realizing that leadership and sufficient capacity at the state level is necessary to facilitate collaboration between obesity prevention partners to implement the strategies identified in the state plan, and

Seeing that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends a state Obesity Prevention Program employ a minimum staff of three (program manager, nutrition specialist, and physical activity specialist) to achieve sufficient capacity, and

Believing that such leadership is not just necessary; it is expected: sixty-two percent of Alaskan adults feel that the government has some responsibility to address the obesity epidemic<sup>vii</sup> because reducing the burden of obesity will take time; Alaska needs to start this process now if we want to slow and eventually reverse our childhood and adult obesity trends,

## The Alaska Public Health Association

1. Advocates for a financially supported state obesity prevention and control program that combines educational, clinical, environmental, and social strategies similar to successful tobacco prevention and control efforts, and
2. Asks individual Board Members and other Members to engage in low and no-cost advocacy efforts to promote state financial support for an obesity prevention and control program such as, but not limited to, the following:
  - Circulation of advocacy action requests to membership
  - Circulation of advocacy action requests to partners and other individuals
  - Posting of ALPHA resolutions on the Alaska Public Health Association's website and/or making this resolution available
  - Participation in email advocacy campaigns
  - Contact with policy makers via phone, letter, email and/or in-person meetings
  - Public testimony in legislative hearings, town hall meetings, and other public forums
  - Contribution of op-ed articles and/or letters to the editor
  - Contributions to radio programs via calling-in or scheduled interviews
  - Distribution of this resolution statement to policy makers and key officials such as the Governor's office and, at a minimum, members of Senate and House HESS and Finance Committees.

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### Fiscal & Public Health Impact Statement

**Fiscal Impact on ALPHA:** This action will result in minor costs associated with sending this resolution and accompanying cover letter to the Governor and key political leaders.

**Public Health Impact:** Successful obesity prevention efforts will increase the quality of life for Alaskan citizens, decrease the burden of obesity related diseases, and decrease both public and privately paid medical costs.

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<sup>i</sup> Olshansky SJ, Passaro DJ, Hershow RC, et al. A Potential Decline in Life Expectancy in the United States in the 21st Century. *NEJM* 2005;352:1138-1145.

<sup>ii</sup> Olshansky SJ, Passaro DJ, Hershow RC, et al. A Potential Decline in Life Expectancy in the United States in the 21st Century. *NEJM* 2005;352:1138-1145.

<sup>iii</sup> Alaska YRBS (2007)

<sup>iv</sup> Peterson E, Utermohle C, Green T, Middaugh JP. Prevalence of Overweight Among Anchorage Children: A Study of Anchorage School District Data: 1998-2003. *Section of Epidemiology, Alaska Division of Public Health*

<sup>v</sup> Alaska BRFSS (2007)

<sup>vi</sup> Finkelstein, EA, Fiebelkorn IC, Wang G. State-Level Estimates of Annual Medical Expenditures Attributable to Obesity. *Obesity Research*. 2004; 12(1):18-24.

<sup>vii</sup> Alaska BRFSS (2005)