

## 2019 ALPHA Resolution

### **Support for the role of outdoor recreation in promoting physical activity.**

Whereas the evidence has long been clear that physical activity is protective against chronic disease such as type 2 diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, some cancers and weight gain;

Whereas the 2018 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans reflects an extensive amount of new knowledge proving previous health benefits and new benefits of physical activity including brain health, improved cognitive function, reduced anxiety and depression risk, improved academic achievement and better sleep quality<sup>1</sup>;

Whereas the 2018 Guidelines discuss the proven added benefits of reduced risk of fall-related injuries, all-cause and disease-specific mortality, improved physical function and improved quality of life;

Whereas physical inactivity and poor nutrition are the primary contributors to obesity;

Whereas increasing the proportion of Alaskans who are physically active and decreasing the prevalence of obesity are two of the top 25 public health priorities in the state<sup>2</sup>;

Whereas two out of three Alaska adults and one of three Alaska children are overweight or obese<sup>3</sup> and, in Alaska, \$460 million is spent annually on the direct medical care cost related to obesity<sup>4</sup>;

Whereas obesity is posing a threat to our nation's security as 31% of youth nationwide are disqualified from military service due to obesity and excess weight puts recruits and service members at higher risk for injury<sup>5</sup>;

Whereas public education alone about the benefits of physical activity is insufficient to result in Alaskans making long-term lifestyle changes that involve physical activity;

Whereas the Community Preventive Services Task Force's built environment recommendation to increase physical activity recommends combining activity-friendly routes to everyday destination such as stores, schools, worksites, cultural and natural landmarks, and parks<sup>6</sup>;

Whereas the outdoor recreation community helps create activity-friendly routes and trails and helps build everyday destinations such as parks and natural landmarks through their advocacy, volunteerism, and funding;

Whereas the outdoor recreation community teaches the skills to be comfortable and safe in the outdoors by offering public education on topics such as bear and avalanche safety, trail etiquette, and outdoor programming;

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Washington, DC: U.S Department of Health and Human Services.

<sup>2</sup> <http://hss.state.ak.us/ha2020/25LHLI.htm>

<sup>3</sup> [http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Chronic/Documents/Obesity/pubs/WeightStatus\\_FactSheet.pdf](http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Chronic/Documents/Obesity/pubs/WeightStatus_FactSheet.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Trogdon JG, Finkelstein EA, Feagan CW, Cohen JW. State- and payer-specific estimates of annual medical expenditures attributable Obesity. Obesity 2012.

<sup>5</sup> Mission: Readiness Council for a Strong America. Unhealthy and Unprepared: National security depends on promoting healthy lifestyles from an early age. October 2018.

<sup>6</sup> Community Preventive Services Task Force. Physical Activity: Built Environment Approaches Combining Transportation System Interventions with Land Use and Environmental Design. December 2016

Whereas the outdoor recreation community organizes public events that introduce outdoor opportunities and help the public consider their local parks as everyday destinations; and

Whereas promotion and improvements to Alaska's activity-friendly routes and outdoor recreation facilities can increase physical activity and result in positive health outcomes.

Now therefore be it resolved that the Alaska Public Health Association supports increasing the awareness of the health benefits associated with physical activity and the role the outdoor recreation community can play in promoting physical activity and the following actions:

- Supports community-engaged efforts to increase access to year-round, close-to-home, outdoor recreation facilities;
- Encourages schools to increase the amount of time outdoors and to help build mastery of fundamental skills for lifelong outdoor sports into already scheduled physical education time, with special consideration for those outdoor pursuits for which Alaska has traditions, reputation and naturally provides an excellent classroom including but not limited to Nordic sports, mountaineering, backpacking, trail running, all-season bike riding, whitewater rafting/kayaking/packrafting and fishing. And that in the course of such PE curriculum youth receive nationally recognized instruction for outdoor safety and mountain travel in avalanche-prone terrain;
- Supports awareness and participation in Great Outdoors Month (June) activities conducted on community, state, Native, and federal public lands.