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Governor's Council for Physical Fitness & Health Adopts Resolutions To Boost Physical Education and Nutrition Standards in N.M.

Santa Fe—The Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Health adopted two resolutions and six recommendations addressing the importance of implementing daily physical education and statewide nutrition standards in New Mexico's public schools. The Council also endorsed the adoption of the NM Statewide Strategic Action Plan for NM Action for Healthy Kids and the Governor's Challenge for Healthy Communities and Healthy Worksites.

"These steps are essential in decreasing the epidemic of obesity and the development of related chronic diseases in New Mexico's children," said Chris Frankel, Acting Co-chair of the Counsel representing Notah Begay III.

At its third quarterly meeting on October 27th, the Council adopted the following two resolutions:

- 1) The undersigned organization agreed to join New Mexico Action for Healthy Kids and the NM Coalition to Promote Physical Activity and Nutrition, and the NM Pediatric Society in supporting the implementation of quality, daily physical education in state schools. The physical education program should be developmentally appropriate and provide physical activity of sufficient intensity, duration and frequency to help reduce the rate of obesity and enhance academic performance in New Mexico school children. The focus of physical education should be on the development of healthy, physically educated students.
- 2) The undersigned organization agreed to join New Mexico Action for Healthy Kids, the NM Coalition to Promote Physical Activity and Nutrition, and NM Pediatric Society in supporting the implementation of a statewide policy to establish nutrition standards in state schools which assures that school children have access only to nutritious foods and beverages during the school day.

From 15 recommendations outlined in the NM Action for Healthy Kids plan, the Council proposed the following six priority recommendations to Governor Bill Richardson:

- 1) Provide a licensed physical education instructor in all New Mexico elementary schools.
- 2) Support the expansion of the School Breakfast program in all New Mexico public schools.
- 3) Amend the Public School Code, 22-13-1, to ensure that physical education and health education are required in NM public schools.
- 4) Expand the New Mexico Content Standards with Benchmarks for both Health Education and Physical Education to include Performance Measures.
- 5) Develop a statewide policy that sets standards for the sale of competitive foods sold in schools to include a contractual agreement between New Mexico public schools and the companies that sell products in vending machines on public school property.
- 6) Eliminate the substitution of alternative activities to satisfy the physical education graduation requirement in New Mexico high schools.

According to the New Mexico Department of Health's Clinical Prevention Initiative, 24% of NM high school students weigh too much (10% overweight, 14% at risk for overweight) and 22% of NM 2 to 5 year-olds, who participated in federally funded nutrition programs weigh too much (9% overweight, 13% at risk for overweight). Children and adolescents with weight problems are at increased risk for becoming adults with weight problems, and may develop risk factors for heart disease at and early age.

The Council's next meeting is scheduled for January 5, 2005 at 1:00 pm at the NM Regulation and Licensing Department.

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