



July 24, 2008

The Honorable Tom Harkin  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Christopher Dodd  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeff Bingaman  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Harkin, Senator Dodd and Senator Bingaman:

Trust for America's Health (TFAH), a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization focused on strengthening the public health system, would like to express our support for your introduction of the Federal Obesity Prevention Act of 2008.

As you know, two-thirds of adults are either overweight or obese, and approximately 23 million children are obese or overweight. The health and economic impacts of obesity are very serious. According to the Department of Health and Human Services, obese and overweight adults cost the U.S. anywhere from \$69 billion to \$117 billion per year. More than a quarter of U.S. health care costs are related to physical inactivity, overweight and obesity.

A number of factors have contributed to the nation's obesity epidemic. Americans are eating more and moving less, which inevitably leads to increases in weight, but that is only a part of the problem. We have also created a physical environment that reinforces a less active lifestyle, and in many communities, access to healthy foods is limited. TFAH recently released a new report, *Prevention for a Healthier America: Investments in Disease Prevention Yield Significant Savings, Stronger Communities*, which examines how much the country could save by strategically investing in community disease prevention programs. The report concludes that an investment of \$10 per person per year in proven community-based programs to increase physical activity, improve nutrition, and prevent smoking and other tobacco use could save the country more than \$16 billion annually within five years. This is a return of \$5.60 for every \$1.

Real prevention requires changing the communities in which we live and approaching this as a community-wide, not just an individual challenge. At this time, we have no national, coordinated effort to combat obesity. Your legislation addresses this gap through the creation of an interagency task force that would establish a government-wide strategy for preventing and reducing overweight and obesity; coordinate effective interagency management and priorities for action among Federal agencies; and implement and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy.

If we want Americans to lead healthy, productive lives, we need a strong partnership from the government, private and nonprofit sectors, as well as parents and teachers, to emphasize wellness

and enhance nutrition and physical activity. Your legislation will help to bring key players together to develop a coordinated strategy to mitigate our nation's obesity epidemic. We appreciate your leadership in introducing this legislation and look forward to working with you on this and other public health initiatives in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey Levi". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jeffrey Levi, PhD  
Executive Director