



April 23, 2007

The Honorable Barack Obama
United States Senate
713 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Obama:

On behalf of Trust for America's Health, a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to saving lives by protecting the health of every community and working to make disease prevention a national priority, I would like to thank you for introducing the Healthy Places Act of 2007 (S. 1067) and the Healthy Communities Act of 2007 (S. 1068), which address a critical issue -- the environmental causes of disease.

In 2000, the National Academy of Sciences estimated that 25 percent of developmental diseases are caused by environmental factors. A new report released by Environment California found that in 2004, U.S. facilities reported more than 96 million pounds of air and water emissions of chemicals linked to developmental problems, such as birth defects and learning disabilities, and almost 38 million pounds of chemicals linked to reproductive disorders. Moreover, our most recent report on obesity: *F as in Fat: How Obesity Policies are Failing in America 2006* identified community design as a key factor leading to the nation's growing obesity rate.

The built environment is inextricably linked to public health. Yet, our public health system currently lacks the critical tools it needs to explore and respond to the environmental factors that contribute to a variety of health conditions. By enabling federal, state and local governments to assess the impacts of new local, state and federal policies and projects on environmental health and justice, your bills take an important step in the right direction. We believe that creating an Environmental Health Report Card, as outlined in S.1068, and enabling and assisting states in conducting Health Impact Assessments of policy shifts and new construction, as outlined in S. 1067, are necessary reforms that will help to improve public health.

Again, I want to commend your leadership and thank you for introducing this very important public health bill. TFAH looks forward to working with you on this and other important public health initiatives in the future. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Richard Hamburg, our Director of Government Relations, at (202) 223-9876 or Jeremy Sharp at (202) 223-9870 x20.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey Levi".

Jeffrey Levi, PhD
Executive Director