

**CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL 06-0184R
(Resolution)**

Introduced by: Councilmembers Harris, D'Adamo, Young, Curran, President Dixon,
Councilmembers Conaway, Clarke, Reisinger, Welch, Kraft

Introduced and read first time: June 5, 2006

Assigned to: Education, Housing, Health, and Human Services Committee

REFERRED TO THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES: Health Department, Mayor's Office of Children,
Youth, and Families, Baltimore City Public School System

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

1 A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning

2 **Informational Hearing – Increase in Adolescent Overweight**

3 FOR the purpose of inviting the authors of Trends in the Association of Poverty with Overweight
4 Among US Adolescents, 1971-2004 to share with the City Council the results of the study to
5 examine the trends in adolescent overweight by family poverty status, as well as eating
6 behaviors and physical activity levels.

7 **Recitals**

8 In Overdosed America, a report released this year by a clinical instructor at Harvard Medical
9 School, it is alleged that America's concerns about an impending epidemic of bird flu ought to
10 be eclipsed by concerns with the existing pandemic of childhood obesity – kids between the ages
11 of 6 and 11 are almost more than 4 times more likely to be obese now than in the early 1970s.
12 Not a problem that will be outgrown, 4 out of 5 of the overweight adolescents will become obese
13 adults.

14 The report states that the fundamental problem is not genetic, that medical conditions play a
15 minuscule role in the problem of childhood obesity, and that the cause is almost 100% related to
16 what kids eat and how much physical activity they engage in. The amount of soft drinks
17 children consume has doubled since the 1970s, and studies show that those who indulge
18 routinely consume about 180 calories more per day than kids who don't – translating into
19 gaining an extra pound every 20 days from just the soda calories.

20 Other studies published by the Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine and the
21 Journal of the American Dietetic Association found that a steady diet of television can lead to
22 weight problems in preschoolers. The 1st study found that no matter what the income of the
23 family, how great the mother's education, the quality of the home environment, or what they
24 were watching the TV watchers' risk of obesity was 3 times higher than the non-watchers. The
25 other study found that 24 preschoolers who watched cartoons while eating lunch put away more
26 food than those who eat lunch without television.

27 Researchers at the University of North Carolina assert that teens in poorer minority
28 neighborhoods may be more likely to be overweight than adolescents who live in more affluent
29 neighborhoods because they have fewer safe places to exercise. The study used weight and

EXPLANATION: Underlining indicates matter added by amendment.
~~Strike out~~ indicates matter deleted by amendment.

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1 activity data on teens in grades 7 through 12 and compared it to databases on exercise options
2 within a 5-mile radius of the teens' homes. The results showed that teens in the least educated,
3 minority neighborhoods are ½ as likely to have an exercise facility nearby as those living in
4 more affluent, white areas. Teens in areas with fewer facilities were less likely to exercise and
5 more likely to be overweight. If they had even 1 exercise facility in their area, they were 5% less
6 likely to be overweight, and teens with 4 recreation options in their area were 20% less likely to
7 be overweight and 14% more likely to do 5 sessions of moderate activity a week.

8 The results of the study suggest that there are few opportunities in the more disadvantaged
9 and minority neighborhood to play or get exercise. While public health officials encourage
10 Americans to be physically active, until communities have more safe, affordable places to
11 exercise, it will be difficult for people in poorer neighborhoods to reach that goal. To add to the
12 problem, other studies have found that stores in lower-income areas offer far fewer choices for
13 healthful food. Because less affluent people have more ready access to fast food outlets in their
14 communities, less access to fresh fruits and vegetables in grocery stores, and no place to
15 exercise, they bear a greater burden in striving to live healthy lives.

16 The latest study from one of Baltimore City's most prestigious academic institutions, the
17 Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, shows that while many studies document a
18 doubling of teen obesity rates over the past 30 years, there is an even more concentrated problem
19 than formerly thought among the poor. New research shows that teenagers living in poverty are
20 fully 50% more likely to be overweight than those from wealthier families. Richard A. Miech,
21 one of the authors of the report, notes that this is partly because poor people are more likely to
22 live in neighborhoods that are perceived as dangerous and therefore are less likely to go out for a
23 walk or do something that requires physical exertion.

24 The obesity-income link first showed up in the 1980s, and the gap has been widening ever
25 since. Further, this study shows that poor children have about the same obesity rate as wealthier
26 children through the age of 14 – then a transformation begins and obesity rates rise much faster
27 among children from low-income homes. A co-author of the study, a professor of epidemiology
28 at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, notes that youngsters in this age group
29 increasingly make their own choices about what to eat, have more of their own money to spend,
30 and probably watch more television, a media where fast food and soft- drink companies have
31 successfully targeted minority teens.

32 Seductive TV ads, fast food joints, supermarkets crammed with unhealthy foods, few
33 exercise facilities, unsafe neighborhoods, and limited household income – all are factors that our
34 Baltimore City kids have to deal with. Add to these a school system that consistently fails to
35 deliver even the basic educational necessities, let alone adequate after-school activities and
36 targeted health and fitness programs, and our kids seem to have all the cards stacked against
37 them. In order to begin to offer them the help that they need, we must first understand and
38 accept the fearsome scope of the problem.

39 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE,** That the
40 authors of *Trends in the Association of Poverty with Overweight Among US Adolescents, 1971-*
41 *2004* are invited to share with the City Council the results of the study that examines the trends
42 in adolescent overweight by family poverty status, as well as eating behaviors and physical
43 activity levels.

44 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor,
45 Richard A. Miech, PhD., MPH and Associates, the Dean of the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg

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1 School of Public Health, the Commissioner of Health, the Executive Director of the Mayor's
2 Office of Children, Youth, and Families, the CEO of the Baltimore City Public School System,
3 and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.