



KANSAS HEALTH INSTITUTE

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<p>House Health and Human Services Committee</p>
<p>February 2, 2005</p>
<p>House Bill 2137</p>
<p>Jim McLean Vice President for Public Affairs Kansas Health Institute</p>

Healthier Kansans Through Informed Decisions

The Kansas Health Institute is an independent, nonprofit health policy and research organization based in Topeka, Kansas. Established in 1995 with a multi-year grant from the Kansas Health Foundation, the Kansas Health Institute conducts research and policy analysis on issues that affect the health of Kansans.

Testimony to the House Health and Human Services Committee
Wednesday, February 2, 2005
House Bill 2137

Chairman Morrison and members of the committee, I'm Jim McLean, vice president for public affairs, at the Kansas Health Institute.

KHI is an independent, nonprofit health policy and research organization. Our mission is to conduct research and policy analysis on issues that affect the health and well-being of Kansans and communicate that information to you and other policymakers so that you can make informed decisions.

While KHI is technically neutral on House Bill 2137, we can say without qualification that the problem this bill seeks to address is real and in need of urgent attention.

The rate of childhood obesity has doubled in the last 20 years. Type 2 diabetes, an obesity related disease once uncommon in children, is now seen in children as young as six, placing them at risk of renal failure, blindness, and even death by the time they become young adults.

Research indicates that 70 percent of overweight children 10 to 13 years of age will be overweight or obese as adults.

Already, obesity related medical expenditures in Kansas total \$657 million a year. If current trends—including the climbing rate of childhood obesity—continue, one of every five dollars spent on health care in the year 2020 will be spent on obesity related treatments.

The causes of child and adolescent obesity mirror those in the adult population. They include lack of regular exercise, a more sedentary lifestyle, and over-consumption of high-calorie foods driven in part by advertising that promotes the consumption of such foods.

Research suggests that a broad range of actions are needed to combat the problem of childhood obesity. In addition to restricting children's access to unhealthy foods while at school, as House Bill 2137 would do, educating them about the benefits of eating healthy foods and exercising regularly have proven effective.

In closing, the Kansas Health Institute encourages the members of this committee to comprehensively address the growing problem of childhood obesity in Kansas.