



To: House Health and Human Services Committee

From: Jerry Slaughter
Executive Director

Subject: HB 2137; concerning healthy choices in school vending machines

Date: February 2, 2005

The Kansas Medical Society appreciates the opportunity to appear today in support of HB 2137, which requires school districts to offer food products in their vending machines that are healthy alternatives.

It is widely documented that the prevalence of obesity and overweight, particularly among children, has dramatically increased in our country. Obesity is associated with significant health problems in children (cardiovascular problems, diabetes, depression and low self-esteem, to name but a few), and is an important early risk factor for eventual adult obesity and associated health problems.

The causes of adolescent overweight and obesity are many, but certainly diet is a major factor. The excessive consumption of energy-dense, nutrient-poor food products, which are often the staple of vending machines, is undoubtedly a contributing factor. To the extent that we can encourage healthier eating habits among children by making nutritious snacks, such as vegetables and fruits, low-fat dairy foods, and whole grains, available, we should do so. Addressing the problem of childhood obesity and overweight will take a comprehensive, sustained effort over many years. However, efforts such as that contained in this legislation are steps in the right direction. We urge your support.