



## **SUPPORTING OUR CHILDREN'S NUTRITIONAL WELL-BEING**

**Bills: *The Healthy Schools Act (Sponsor: Assembly Member Nolan/Senator Oppenheimer); A.7124/S.1446 (Sponsor: Assembly Member Galef/Senator LaValle); S.5785 (Sponsor: Senator Oppenheimer)***

***NYSPAC Position: SUPPORT***

The New York State Public Affairs Committee (NYSPAC) of the Junior League urges the enactment of legislation to improve the nutritional well-being of New York's children. Current bills that would address this issue being considered by the New York State legislature include the Healthy Schools Act (S.4118/A.7804), establishing healthy nutritional standards for food and beverages served in schools; A.7124/S.1446, providing for the sale of healthy foods and beverages on school property and at school functions; and S.5785, establishing statewide school nutrition standards. NYSPAC urges members of the New York State Senate and Assembly to take action on this issue and to support the passage of legislation to improve childhood nutrition.

**Addressing issues relating to childhood nutrition is vital to improving the health of New York's children and young adults.** NYSPAC has supported healthy school food legislation for several years because we recognize that good nutrition and regular exercise are central to the well-being of children. A healthy diet, coupled with an exercise program, actually improves not only students' health but also their overall performance in school. Legislation to address these issues is now more critical than ever, in light of ever-increasing childhood obesity rates. The prevalence of obesity in the United States more than tripled among children and adolescents from 1980 to 2008. Currently, nearly one in three children is overweight or obese. Obesity in children has resulted in an increase in many serious and chronic illnesses, including:

- **Diabetes.** The increasing prevalence of Type 2 diabetes among children and teens is one of the most serious issues stemming from the growth in childhood obesity. Up to 45% of all newly diagnosed Type 2 diabetes cases in New York State occur in children. Type 2 diabetics produce insufficient insulin (or their cells ignore insulin), leading to a buildup of glucose in the blood that can damage the eyes, kidneys, nerves and heart. The estimated cost of the medical care associated with diabetes in New York State is \$8 billion annually, even before factoring in lost productivity or questions of resource allocation.
- **Heart Disease.** Various studies have linked heart disease to obesity, and one recent study indicated that obese children as young as age three show signs of a condition linked to heart disease later in life. Obese persons have a more than 100% greater likelihood of developing heart failure than non-overweight persons. The American Heart Association states that overweight adolescents are overwhelmingly likely to become obese adults.

Other long-term conditions associated with obesity include high blood pressure, hypertension, precursors to heart disease, asthma and sleep apnea. All told, research indicates that treating the chronic illnesses stemming from obesity costs the United States an estimated \$147 billion (and New York State more than \$6 billion, including \$242 million for children alone) each year.

**Laws to establish strong, science-based nutritional standards for the food and beverages offered our children at school, to influence their food choices to make them healthier and to encourage physical activity are long overdue.** Children consume about 30-50% of their overall calorie intake at school, illustrating that schools must play a pivotal role in preventing obesity among children and teenagers. Each school day provides multiple opportunities for students to learn about health and practice healthy behaviors. While some have expressed concerns that schools might lose money if they offered healthier food and beverage choices, research refutes this. A 2005 U.S. Department of Agriculture study found that 12 out of 17 schools and school districts reporting income data for a comprehensive study on improving the nutritional content of school food actually increased their revenue as a result of the changes made, while four reported no change. On behalf of over 7,000 women represented by the 17 Junior Leagues of New York State, we ask you to take immediate action to help our children live longer, healthier and more productive lives. **For more information, please contact [womenandhealthtaskforce@jl-nyspac.org](mailto:womenandhealthtaskforce@jl-nyspac.org).**

---

**Junior League of Binghamton • Junior League of Bronxville • Junior League of Brooklyn • Junior League of Buffalo  
Junior League of Kingston • Junior League of Long Island • Junior League of the City of New York • Junior League of Northern  
Westchester • Junior League of Orange County • Junior League of Pelham • Junior League of Poughkeepsie Junior League of Rochester  
Junior League of Schenectady • Junior League of Syracuse • Junior League of Troy • Junior League of Westchester on Hudson  
Junior League of Westchester on the Sound**