June 22, 2009

The Hon. Barack Obama President of the United States The White House Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We urge you to act boldly and promptly to reverse our nation's obesity epidemic.

The epidemic of overweight and obesity, which has engulfed millions of children and adults over the past several decades, is undermining the nation's health just as global warming is undermining the planet's health. The increased rates of obesity will negate many of our nation's investments in health-care and could actually condemn youths to shorter life spans than their parents'. Tackling obesity could be one of the most powerful means of improving Americans' health and reducing health-care costs.

The harms caused by obesity are well-known: hypertension, heart attacks, strokes, diabetes, cancer, and many others. Each year obesity causes tens of thousands of premature deaths and tens of billions of dollars in avoidable medical costs. Obesity also leads to heart-wrenching psychosocial problems, such as difficulty making friends, stigmatization, and discrimination in employment.

What is lacking is not ideas for programs to combat obesity, but a national commitment to establish a comprehensive federal effort to prevent and reverse obesity. That effort should begin in the womb and infancy, extend to schools, then include workplaces, doctors' offices, and the general community.

The U.S. government could use as a model the United Kingdom's broad and well-funded anti-obesity strategy.<sup>1</sup> That program involves various ministries in the national government, local health agencies, new laws and regulations, and full use of the bully pulpit.

We urge you to harness your imagination and commitment to reversing the obesity epidemic by signing an **Executive Order that would create a Presidential Commission on Healthy Weights, Healthy Lives**. That Commission would be charged with developing a government-wide plan built on a sound scientific foundation. We would welcome the opportunity to help you take on this challenging problem.

Respectfully,

\_

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives: a cross-government strategy for England. 2008. www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH 082378.

## **Individuals**

David B. Allison, Ph.D. University of Alabama at Birmingham Birmingham, AL

Gerard Anderson, Ph.D.
Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of
Public Health
Baltimore, MD

Caroline M. Apovian, M.D., F.A.C.P, F.A.C.N. Boston University School of Medicine Boston, MA

Cheryl Aspy, Ph.D.
University of Oklahoma College of
Medicine
Oklahoma City, OK

Diane Berry, Ph.D., C.A.N.P. University of North Carolina School of Nursing Chapel Hill, NC

George L. Blackburn, M.D., Ph.D. Harvard Medical School Boston, MA

Henry Blackburn, M.D. University of Minnesota School of Public Health Minneapolis, MN

Joan Bloom, Ph.D. UC Berkeley School of Public Health Berkeley, CA

Jeffrey Blumberg, Ph.D., F.A.C.N., C.N.S. Tufts University Boston, MA Claude Bouchard, Ph.D.
Pennington Biomedical Research Center
Louisiana State University System
Baton Rouge, LA

Kelly Brownell, Ph.D. Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity Yale University New Haven, CT

Greta R. Bunin, Ph.D. University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine Philadelphia, PA

Carlos A. Camargo, M.D., Dr.P.H. Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School Boston, MA

Lorenzo A. Canizares Pennsylvania State Education Association Harrisburg, PA

Lilian Cheung, D.Sc., R.D. Harvard School of Public Health Boston, MA

David W. Crawford, M.P.H. Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention Augusta, ME

Martha L. Daviglus, MD, PhD Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine Chicago, IL

Devra L. Davis, Ph.D., M.P.H. University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute Pittsburgh, PA Esa M. Davis, M.D., M.P.H. Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine Cleveland, OH

Paul Estabrooks, Ph.D.
Translational Obesity Research Program at
Virginia Tech
Blacksburg, VA

Douglas Evans, Ph.D. George Washington University School of Public Health and Health Services Washington, D.C.

John Foreyt, Ph.D. Baylor College of Medicine Houston, TX

Christopher Gardner, Ph.D. Stanford Prevention Research Center Stanford, CA

Michael Goran, Ph.D. Keck School, University of Southern California Los Angeles, CA

Penny Gordon-Larsen, Ph.D. University of North Carolina Schools of Public Health and Medicine Chapel Hill, NC

Lawrence Gostin, J.D. Georgetown University Law Center Washington, D.C.

Lawrence Green, Dr.P.H. UC San Francisco School of Medicine San Francisco, CA

Phillip Greenland, M.D. Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine Chicago, IL David Heber, M.D., Ph.D. UCLA School of Medicine Los Angeles, CA

Jack Hollis, Ph.D.
Kaiser Permanente Center for Health
Research
Portland, OR

Frank Hu, M.D., Ph.D. Harvard School of Public Health Boston, MA

Richard J. Jackson M.D. M.P.H. UCLA School of Public Health Los Angeles, CA

Julie Kaye, M.P.H., R.D., C.D.N. Nutrition Counselor and Educator New York, NY

David Katz, M.D., M.P.H., F.A.C.P.M. Yale University School of Medicine New Haven, CT

George Kelley, D.A., F.A.C.S.M. West Virginia University School of Medicine Morgantown, West Virginia

Thomas E. Kottke, M.D., M.S.P.H. Health Partners Minneapolis, MN

Ronald M. Krauss, M.D. Children's Hospital Oakland Research Institute Oakland, CA

Lewis Landsberg, M.D.

Northwestern University Feinberg School
of Medicine
Chicago, IL

David S. Ludwig, M.D., Ph.D. Harvard Medical School Boston, MA

Joanne R. Lupton, Ph.D. Texas A&M University College Station, TX

JoAnn E. Manson, M.D., Dr.P.H. Harvard Medical School Boston, MA

Wayne Miller, Ph.D. George Washington School of Public Health and Health Services Washington, D.C.

Joel Moskowitz, Ph.D. UC Berkeley School of Public Health Berkeley, CA

Keshia Pollack, Ph.D., M.P.H. Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health Baltimore, MD

Barry Popkin, Ph.D.
University of North Carolina School of
Public Health
Chapel Hill, NC

Bill Reger-Nash, Ed.D.West Virginia University School of MedicineMorgantown, WV

Tom M Rifai, M.D.
Wayne State University School of
Medicine
Detroit, MI

Susan Roberts, Ph.D. Tufts University Boston, MA Amy Root, M.P.H. University of Southern Maine Muskie School of Public Service Augusta, ME

Frank M. Sacks, M.D.
Brigham & Women's Hospital and
Harvard School of Public Health
Boston, MA

Stephen Shortell, Ph.D., M.P.H. UC Berkeley School of Public Health Berkeley, CA

Jeremiah Stamler, M.D. Northwestern University Chicago, IL

Meir Stampfer, M.D., Dr.P.H. Harvard Medical School Boston, MA

Lisa A. Sutherland, Ph.D. Dartmouth Medical School Hanover, NH

Philippe Thuillier, Ph.D. Oregon Health Science University Portland, OR

Amanda Visek, Ph.D. George Washington School of Public Health and Health Services Washington, D.C.

Walter Willett, M.D., Dr.P.H. Harvard School of Public Health Boston, MA

Lisa R. Young, Ph.D., R.D. New York University New York, NY

Qi Zhang, Ph.D. Old Dominion University Norfolk, VA

## Page 5

## **Organizations**

American College Health Association	Louisville Metro Department of Public Health and Wellness
American Diabetes Association	National Action Against Obesity
American Medical Athletic Association	
American Public Health Association	Multnomah County Health Department National Association of Counties
American Running Association	National Association of County and City Health Officials
American Society of Bariatric Physicians	
California Center for Public Health Advocacy	National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
	National Association of School Nurses
California Food Policy Advocates	National Coalition for December 1
Center for Science in the Public Interest*	National Coalition for Promoting Physical Activity
Community Health Partnership: Oregon's Public Health Institute	National Consumers League
D	National Physicians Alliance
Directors of Health Promotion and Education	National WIC Association
Fitness Forward	New York State Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Alliance
Hawaii State Department of Health	
Health Policy Partners of Maine Medical	Partnership for Prevention
Care Development, Inc.	Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association
International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub Association	Public Health Advocacy Institute
League of American Bicyclists	Public Health Institute
Lifestyle Medicine Institute	Shape Up America!

The Century Foundation

The Obesity Society

The Dr. Robert C. and Veronica Atkins

Trust for America's Health

Center for Weight and Health

United Fresh Produce Association

The Food Trust

<sup>\*</sup>Please reply via Dr. Michael F. Jacobson, Center for Science in the Public Interest, 1875 Connecticut Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20009; mdonahue@cspinet.org