

# Protect Our Children's Health!

## H. 4376, An Act to Promote Proper School Nutrition

**THE PROBLEM:** Junk food and sugary drinks are contributing to an epidemic of obesity and diabetes among our children.

In Massachusetts, 29% of children and 55% of adults are overweight or obese. Rates of obesity among children have more than doubled in the past two decades.

Overweight children are at higher risk of developing diabetes, asthma, heart disease, depression and low self-esteem. Poor nutrition also reduces children's ability to learn.

Children are over-eating food and drinks high in fat and sugar. One source of this problem is the sale of junk food in schools. The easy availability of candy bars, chips, and soda in school vending machines encourage unhealthy eating habits.



**A SOLUTION:** Healthy food choices for our children at school.

The time to prevent obesity is in childhood and schools are an excellent place to start. Children learn the habits of a life-time in school – one of those habits should be healthy eating.

**HOUSE BILL 4376, An Act to Promote Proper School Nutrition:**

- Directs the Department of Public Health (DPH) to establish healthy standards for snacks and beverages sold in vending machines, school stores, and cafeteria ala carte lines. These standards are to be in accordance with Institute of Medicine guidelines, which recommend that sodas be replaced with water, low- and non-fat milk, and juice; fat and sugar be reduced in snacks; and fresh fruits and vegetables be made available in cafeterias.
- Establishes a Governor's Commission on Childhood Obesity to develop a coordinated statewide plan to reduce childhood obesity.
- Requires DPH and the Department of Education (DOE) to set guidelines for the training of school nurses to help children with diabetes and eating disorders and to collect and evaluate data on these conditions.
- Calls for an investigation of how to make it easier for schools to purchase fresh foods from local farmers.



Almost 80% of children who are overweight will become obese adults.

**ACTION:** Your help is needed to pass this bill!

- **CONTACT** your state legislators and urge them to support House Bill 4376, An Act to Promote Proper School Nutrition. To determine who they are, visit [www.WhereDoIVoteMA.com](http://www.WhereDoIVoteMA.com). Then call your legislators at the State House: (617) 722-2000.
- **SHARE** copies of this fact sheet with your friends, family, and neighbors and urge them to contact their legislators.
- **ASK** your school board members, PTA, church, or hospital to endorse this bill.
- **WRITE** a letter to your local newspaper in support of this bill.