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January 22, 2009

The Honorable Max Baucus  
U.S. Senate  
Finance Committee  
511 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Grassley  
U.S. Senate  
Finance Committee  
135 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Baucus and Ranking Member Grassley:

On behalf of the Campaign to End Obesity, I'd like to commend your efforts to include the childhood obesity demonstration project in reauthorization of the State Children's Health Insurance Program that was recently approved by the Finance Committee. Authorizing grants to community organizations across the nation to develop programs that encourage healthy living is a step in the right direction to preventing obesity, and we urge you to pass the bill with inclusion of this demonstration project quickly.

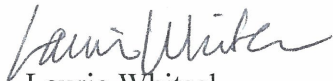
The Campaign to End Obesity is nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to reversing the rising rates of obesity through influencing federal policies and regulations. The Campaign brings together leaders in public health, academia, and industry such as the American Heart Association, Trust for America's Health, Harvard Medical School and Johnson & Johnson (see attached list of Advisory Board and Health Care Working Group members) that share one common voice in calling for leadership from the federal government to address this crisis.

Today, 16 percent of America's children are considered to have overweight or obesity. You know all too well the dangerous health consequences of obesity, but in addition to these concerns, the disease can also cause depression, social stigmatization, poor academic performance, and much more – challenges particularly acute for our children. The childhood obesity demonstration project is the first among many steps the government can take to address childhood obesity.

As Congress considers health care reform, we urge you to consider expanding the identification and treatment of childhood and adult obesity. For instance, BMI and body composition should be screened as standard vital signs in all medical visits for children and adults so that risk for becoming overweight or obese is detected early enough to allow for interventions.

With \$177 billion a year and 83 cents of every health care dollar spent on obesity-related health care, the nation cannot afford to ignore this epidemic. We look forward to working with you to develop policies that enable better identification, management, and treatment of obesity.

Sincerely,



Laurie Whitsel  
Health Care Working Group Co-Chair  
American Heart Association



Jane Adams  
Health Care Working Group Co-Chair  
Johnson & Johnson

cc: The Honorable Ted Kennedy and The Honorable Michael Enzi