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Baltimore City Council Task Force on Childhood Obesity Releases Final Report

Council President Rawlings-Blake and Councilwoman Welch Released Report at Event Today

Baltimore, MD (January 9, 2008) – The Baltimore City Council Task Force on Childhood Obesity, the result of a City Council Resolution sponsored by Councilwoman Agnes Welch (District 9), released its final report today including recommendations for action to reverse the dangerously rising trend of obesity among children in Baltimore. Addressing the national increase of childhood obesity over the past thirty years, the Task Force developed recommendations to place Baltimore in a proactive role, tackling a nationwide crisis here at home.

“My commitment to this issue comes from twenty-five years as a member of this City Council,” said Councilwoman Welch. “During that time, the rate of childhood obesity has more than doubled, reaching epidemic levels.... Today, we stand in a position to reverse the dangerous trend of childhood obesity, prevent it from infecting future generations, and stop the negative health effects dead in their tracks.”

Joined by Council President Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, members of the Task Force focused on all aspects of society in taking on this issue. “Let’s be clear, we did not get into this epidemic overnight, and we will not resolve it overnight,” said Council President Rawlings-Blake. “As we recognize our role in reversing this trend, let’s today resolve to recognize the role we all play – as parents, as teachers, as mentors, and as role models – in ending the epidemic of childhood obesity.”

The complete report is available at www.baltimorecitycouncil.com. Among the recommendations in the five priority areas assessed by the Task Force – community and the environment, schools, after-school program providers, preschools and childcare services, and the healthcare sector – include:

- Promotion of healthy food choices and physical activity by improving conditions of neighborhood parks, improving access to healthy food choices in low-income neighborhoods, and developing policies that will support healthy eating among City residents.
- Implementation of “Health Zones” surrounding targeted neighborhood schools to promote best practices by engaging an entire community to be healthier.
- Establishment of nutrition education requirements in schools, renegotiation with food vendors to provide healthier choices to students, and aggressive promotion of those choices by engaging educators, staff, and students.
- Elimination of unhealthy foods from after school sites, promotion of wellness programs and holding those programs to specific performance measures.
- Increased access to government-run nutrition programs and improvement of food provisions in day care centers.
- Promotion of breastfeeding in healthcare facilities, education led by the Baltimore City Health Department and among healthcare professionals, and proper recording of infant weight-for-height measurements.