



**Memorandum in Support  
S799 (Kennedy)  
Prevention of Childhood Obesity Act**

The Children's Health Fund (CHF) supports S.799, the Prevention of Childhood Obesity Act. This measure would provide grants to states and eligible public or private nonprofit entities to support plans and activities to prevent and control childhood obesity. The legislation also codifies the role of the Federal Government in preventing obesity and promoting healthy lifestyles – with the establishment of the Federal Leadership Commission to Prevent Childhood Obesity, which would spearhead activities for all Federal departments and agencies.

Physical inactivity and unhealthy diets have led to record numbers of overweight children. Nationally, 13 percent of children aged 6 to 11 years and 14 percent of adolescents aged 12 to 19 years are overweight. This represents a tripling of the rate of overweight in young people since 1979. Overweight adolescents have a 70 percent chance of becoming overweight or obese adults. These children and adolescents also have an increased risk of developing type II diabetes and heart disease.

The rate of overweight in children and adolescents is even higher among certain populations, including poor, low income and medically underserved areas, those that the Children's Health Fund targets through the National Network of Child Health Programs.

The Children's Health Fund has documented a higher rate of overweight and diabetes among medically underserved children and as a response to this alarming trend, initiated the Starting Right Initiative to help children and their families incorporate healthy eating and physical activity into their lifestyles.

This legislation astutely recognizes that, in addition to obesity, eating disorders such as anorexia, bulimia, and binge-eating afflict thousands of adolescents. Females account for more incidents of anorexia than men. The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) estimates that 0.5 to 3.7 percent of females will suffer from anorexia in their lifetimes. Binge eating disorders are also a serious health threat, 5 percent of Americans suffer from binge eating within a six month period. The NIMH reported that eating disorders often develop during adolescence.

*The Children's Health Fund, through its work with hospitals and health centers throughout the country, has provided comprehensive pediatric care to more than 300,000 medically underserved children since its inception in 1987. By providing a medical home to thousands of children through 17 programs in 13 states and the District of Columbia, CHF recognizes the importance of public health insurance programs to ensure continuity of care, the continuation of a child's access to a medical home.*