



THE CITY OF SPRINGFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

MAYOR DOMENIC J. SARNO

HOME OF THE BASKETBALL HALL OF FAME

PRESS RELEASE

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MASSACHUSETTS HEALTH OFFICIALS APPROVE NEW SCHOOL NUTRITION STANDARDS

July 13, 2011 – School Aged Children in the Commonwealth scored a major victory towards health and wellness when Governor Deval Patrick signed “An Act Relative to School Nutrition” making it law on July 30, 2010. The new law directs the State Department of Public Health (DPH) to establish healthy standards for snacks and beverages sold in vending machines, school stores and cafeterias. These standards are to be in accordance with the Institute of Medicine guidelines.

The Massachusetts Public Health Council passed regulations that will meet or exceed the national nutrition standards. Based on Massachusetts data, the City of Springfield is a very high risk community with 32.5% obesity rate compared to 20% for Massachusetts. Additionally, Springfield School Body Mass Index (BMI) PreK-5th grade found that 61% of 7-8 year olds are either overweight or obese. “The law will establish health and educational frameworks that will give our children healthy options while they are in school” said Domenic J. Sarno, Mayor of the City of Springfield. “I congratulate the Patrick/Murray Administration and the state legislature for making the health of our children a priority” he added.

Despite the despairing statistical look at obesity and health disparities, Springfield does have community assets addressing policy and environmental issues around active living and healthy eating. In 2009, Springfield launched Mass in Motion, one of ten-state-wide grants to prioritize health and wellness at the community level. In August of 2009, Mayor Sarno appointed the Springfield Wellness Leadership Council consisting of: Timothy Allen, City Councilor; Anne Awad, Caring Health Center; Julie Costello, YMCA; Janet Rodriguez Denney, Elder Affairs;

Aaron Goldman, Springfield Institute; Joan Kagan, Square One; Lynn Ostrowski, Health New England; Andrew Morehouse, Food Bank; Charles Redmond, Springfield College; Frank Robinson, Partners for a Healthier Community; Coleen Walsh, Springfield School System; Chrystal Witcopp, M.D., Baystate Medical Center. “On behalf of the children in the Springfield Public School System I am indebted to these individuals who supported this very important legislation,” Sarno said.

Helen R. Caulton-Harris, Springfield Director of Health and Human Services is a member of the Massachusetts Public Health Council and has been appointed by Governor Patrick to the Massachusetts Food Policy Council. “The link between nutrition and learning has been documented through research studies and evidence exists that nutrition related disorders are greater among low income populations. I consider it a great honor to be a part of the body that passed these regulations.” The successful implementation of this law will prolong life and prevent our children from living with chronic diseases as adults” said Ms. Caulton-Harris.

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