

Policy Priorities from the 2015 Physical Activity and Nutrition Forum

On May 28, 2015, the Hawaii State Department of Health facilitated the 2015 Physical Activity and Nutrition Forum. Two years had passed since stakeholders agreed to the goals and objectives of the 2013-2020 Hawaii Physical Activity and Nutrition (PAN) Plan. The state and community partners and experts met during the Forum to review the evaluation results of the PAN Plan and discuss the next priorities for action. One hundred forty statewide partners and experts proposed the policy priorities outlined below. Nineteen state level policies across four sectors were identified as key strategies to create healthy environments in our community, schools, worksites, and health systems.

Healthy Communities (Physical Activity)

▪ **Complete Streets Implementation**

- Complete Streets ensure that all people in Hawaii have the ability to safely walk, bike, and access mass transportation on our streets and transportation infrastructure in addition to driving a vehicle.
- While state and county level legislation for adopting Complete Streets exists, implementation varies. Implementation includes changing current design guidelines to make communities more walkable and bikeable, adopting and using a complete streets checklist on all roadway projects, and developing a formalized method for government agencies, community organizations and business to work together as they roll out development projects.
- **Recommendation:** Continue support for the implementation of Complete Streets including developing related policies and activities to propel progress.



▪ **State & County Level Goals for Active Transportation**

- Active Transportation includes any form of human-powered transportation like walking and biking. Clear state and county level goals to increase the percentage of active transportation to places like work and school, encourages agencies to prioritize infrastructure and programs to promote active transportation.
- **Recommendation:** Goals include developing safe, accessible, and comfortable pedestrian, bicycle, and transit networks that provide transportation options for all users. Strategies include:
 - Investing in the active transportation system
 - Building new or retrofitting existing roads to be Complete Streets
 - Adopting walkable communities concepts
 - Expanding and improving bicycle infrastructure
 - Developing a robust off-street trail network to serve both transportation and recreational functions
 - Supporting improving and expanding transit service and access
 - Improving transportation connections
 - Developing multi-modal transportation systems that are accessible to all people

▪ **Health Impact Assessments**

- A Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is a structured process that brings together public health expertise, scientific data, and stakeholder input to identify potential health effects of a proposed policy, project, or plan, and offer recommendations based on possible risk or benefits identified in the study. HIAs can help identify the potential and overlooked health consequences of policies, plans, programs, and projects across a range of sectors.
- **Recommendation:** Explore legislation to encourage use of HIA's on projects such as large-scale transportation or housing projects to review potential impact on health.

▪ **Secured Bike Parking at State Events and Locations**

- Hawaii's workforce is heavily car-dependent.
- **Recommendation:** Ensure that all State locations and events have secured bicycle parking, to promote and normalize bike use as alternative form of transportation.
- **Recommendation:** Develop secured state employee bike parking model to encourage adoption by other employers.

Healthy Communities (Nutrition)

▪ **Food Systems Task Force**

- Hawaii is dependent on imported food and currently has an inventory of fresh produce that would supply consumers for no more than ten days.
- **Recommendation:** Establish a Food Systems Task Force to research, review, and provide recommendations for increased food security and other legislation as a step towards creating a supportive more robust food system in Hawaii.



▪ **More Support for Locally Produced, Healthy Foods**

- Largescale food systems and consumer behavior in Hawaii competes with locally grown and available fresh fruits and vegetables.
- **Recommendation:** Increase access to locally produced, healthy foods. Strategies include:
 - Establishing and maintaining certified kitchens
 - Creating local food hubs
 - Continued expansion of electronic benefit transfers (EBT) at Farmer's Markets
 - Expanding availability and access to community gardens

▪ **Institutional Policies for Access to Healthy Food & Drink Options**

- Institutional policies for access to healthy food and drinks create work environments that are consistent with promoting the well-being of the workforce. State government is a major employer in Hawaii and can provide the model for practicing purchase, service and sale of healthy foods.

- **Recommendation:** Establish state government level policies related to access to healthy food and drinks. Strategies can include:
 - Establishing guidelines for foods and beverages for purchase and those served in vending machines, stores, cafeterias, and other operations in government facilities, or at government meetings or events.
 - Adopting departmental policies like the Department of Health’s policy related to the purchase of healthy foods and beverages offered at meetings funded with state or federal funds.

- **Guidelines for Healthier Kids’ Meals**

- Restaurants that offer children’s menus typically serve refillable sugar-sweetened beverages with their advertised children’s meals, leaving parents to pay extra for a healthy drink for their child. SSBs are the greatest source of added sugars in the national diet, and daily consumption is strongly linked to higher childhood obesity and type 2 diabetes risk. Studies demonstrate that people are more likely to select the default option rather than request an alternative.
- **Recommendation:** Restaurants should offer 100% juice, bottled water and low-fat milk as part of the bundled children’s’ menu price.



- **Warning Labels on Sugar-Sweetened Beverages (SSBs)**

- SSBs have added sugar, such as sweetened fruit juices, fruit drinks, sodas, sports drinks, energy drinks, and flavored milks. Drinking SSBs daily contributes to obesity, diabetes, tooth decay, and heart disease. Health warnings increase knowledge of health risks and have successfully reduced consumption of products such as tobacco, alcohol, and unhealthy food.
- **Recommendation:** Require a safety warning on all SSB containers and packaging to educate consumers about the health risks associated with drinking SSBs to help them make informed choices.

- **Sugar-Sweetened Beverage Fee to Fund Obesity Prevention and Health Promotion**

- Drinking just one 8-ounce SSB per day increases a child’s odds of becoming obese by 60%. Children and adolescents are especially price sensitive; therefore an SSB fee is expected to shift their purchases to lower-calorie drinks. Preliminary results from Mexico’s 1 peso per liter tax has shown a 6 percent reduction in SSB purchases and a 4 percent increase in bottled water purchases. In 2014, an independent poll conducted by Ward Research found that 67% of adults in Hawaii support increasing the price of SSBs if the money raised is used to prevent childhood obesity.
- **Recommendation:** Introduce a 1-cent per ounce on SSBs. Fees collected could fund childhood and adult obesity prevention and health promotion.

Healthy Schools

■ Fitness Assessments in Grades 5, 7, & 9

- Regular physical activity is one of the most important factors contributing to health and well-being of our children. Research shows that children who meet the recommended physical activity guidelines maintain higher attendance rates, are better able to learn, exhibit higher self-esteem, and have lower risk of developing chronic diseases. Fitness assessments provide individualized reports for students and parents as well as reports for teachers, administrators, and researchers that help them analyze school, district, or state level data.
- Fitness assessment is currently used in some Hawaii K-12 schools for formative and summative evaluation of student fitness levels in order to guide instruction and monitor student progress in physical education class, this information also helps students to set personal fitness goals, and provides valuable data to families regarding their child's health.
- **Recommendation:** Require implementation of a statewide standardized fitness assessment in Grades 5, 7, & 9 that will provide the necessary data to enhance the current physical education practices in our schools, provide parents knowledge of their children's fitness levels, and educate the community about the fitness levels of Hawaii's children.



■ Increase Health and Physical Education Requirements for Middle School Grades

- The middle school years are a critical time in young people's lives during which they go through many developmental changes and form behaviors that will greatly affect their future. Health and physical education provides students with the knowledge, attitudes, and skills they need to become successful learners and healthy adults. Characteristics of high quality health and physical education programs include the following: course requirements for all students pre K-12, planned and sequential curriculum that is research-based, instructional methods and strategies that are interactive and developmentally appropriate, certified teachers, and on-going professional development opportunities.
- In addition to the student health benefits, research indicates that schools that provide time for quality physical education generate a positive effect on academic achievement even when provided as part of the regular school day – including increased concentration; improved mathematics, reading and writing scores; and a reduction in disruptive behaviors.
- **Recommendation:** Assure that all schools in Hawaii have high quality health and physical education programs and students are required to take classes in health or physical education in middle school grades.

▪ **Strengthen Wellness in Child Care Licensing Requirements**

- Early childhood education and care programs should provide safe and healthy play and learning environments that are conducive to the well-being of young children. These programs can play an integral part in children’s development by providing children with good nutrition, physical activity, and other learning opportunities that contribute to school readiness and a successful future. One in four children entering kindergarten in Hawaii are overweight or obese and research shows that obesity is difficult to reverse in adolescence or adulthood. Research demonstrates that taste preferences and lifelong healthy habits are formed in early childhood years.
- **Recommendation:** Complete and adopt the early childhood education and care program wellness guidelines that are in development and identify additional areas where policies can be strengthened.

▪ **Additional School Physical Exam Requirement at Seventh Grade**

- School physical examinations are currently only conducted upon entry into the school system, usually in kindergarten. The expansion of physical examination requirements for public school students will help reinforce the adoption of a culture of wellness and preventive health care and aligns with the benefits in the Affordable Care Act. For children and adolescents who are obese, the physical examination visit provides an opportunity for the healthcare provider to assess possible complications such as pre-diabetes or high blood pressure, identify the appropriate resources for the child and the child’s family, and develop a plan to support family-based lifestyle changes.
- **Recommendation:** Require one additional physical exam at grade seven to coincide with the state immunization mandate for middle school.

▪ **Nutrition and Agriculture Curriculum in All Grades**

- Educating children about nutrition and agriculture provides a lifelong base for healthy living. Nutrition and agriculture education can support children’s development of healthy eating habits—such as preferences for and consumption of fruits and vegetables. The majority of public schools in Hawaii have school gardens that are used for instruction with students. Students who participate in school gardens are more likely to be familiar with different types of fruits and vegetables, be willing to taste them, and exhibit a preference for eating more fruits and vegetables.
- **Recommendation:** Provide nutrition and agriculture curriculum in the classroom to reinforce the positive changes that have been introduced in the school meals program such as more servings and a greater variety of vegetables.



Healthy Worksites

▪ State Level Worksite Wellness Policy

- Adults spend almost a third of their lives at work making the worksite an ideal place to promote wellness.
- **Recommendation:** Establish state level policy to enhance and promote worksite wellness efforts in state agencies to support a healthier workforce, increased morale, higher employee productivity, reduced absenteeism, and a reduction in healthcare costs.

▪ Paid Family Leave

- California, New Jersey and most recently, Rhode Island, have all passed strong state policies providing partial wage replacement for family and medical leave purposes. California's comprehensive paid family leave program allows six weeks of wage replacement leave at 55 percent of a worker's usual weekly earnings when the worker needed to take time off of work to bond with a new child or to care for a seriously ill family member. Passage of the law in 2002 has resulted in economic, public health, and business savings.
- **Recommendation:** Explore the possibility of a paid family leave policy for Hawaii.



▪ State Health Risk Assessment

- Health Risk Assessments (HRAs) are tools that help to analyze overall health and health risks, and are used to develop a plan specific to a person's needs. Research has shown that employees who take HRAs within the context of a comprehensive health promotion program have lower medical claims costs than other employees who do not participate. Wellness programs have also shown to decrease rates of illness and injuries, reduce employee absenteeism, improve employee morale, and increase productivity.
- **Recommendation:** Explore policy to encourage employers to increase the use of HRAs within a comprehensive worksite wellness program.

Health Care Systems

▪ Reimbursement for Preventive Care

- Additional research could be conducted to investigate gaps in health care providers' ability to prevent and provide treatment for obesity, pre-diabetes, and other preventive health care services.
- **Recommendation:** Develop legislation to encourage and support reimbursement for preventive care.

