Sample Op-Ed on Childhood Obesity

Feel free to customize this for use in your city. For example, you could provide additional statistics about childhood obesity rates in your own city, county and/or state, and/or mention the successful program(s) in your city that address childhood obesity. You could also choose to personalize the piece. If you’re a parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle, etc., you can talk about how you plan to encourage the young people in your life to engage in a healthier, more physically active lifestyle. Or, you can talk about how you’re setting an example in your own life for the young people in your city by your personal nutrition and fitness choices.

**OPINION: “OUR CHILDREN DESERVE A HEALTHY START”**

*By [Mayor’s Name]*

Childhood obesity in our country has more than tripled in the past 30 years. Today, one in six children in our country is obese. Being overweight or obese puts kids at risk for high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease, and other diseases we normally see in adults. Forget for a moment about the billions of dollars in additional annual taxpayer health care costs due to childhood obesity — according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, nearly $150 billion annually. What’s truly inconceivable is that, for the first time in history, our children could have shorter life expectancies than we do.

To put it plainly, this is unacceptable. As parents and as citizens, we make it a point of pride to be able to say that our children will have a better life than we do. And as the grown-ups in this community, we can’t afford to be complacent about the health and wellbeing of our children. We need to stand up and do what we can – EVERYTHING we can – to reverse this alarming trend. Nationally, there’s a consensus that America can and must reverse the childhood obesity epidemic within a generation, and in our city, we should be at least that ambitious.

And we already have the knowledge, the tools and the capacity to do it. While we can’t turn the tide on this epidemic overnight, we do know what works – childhood obesity isn’t an incurable disease. Experts agree that balanced diet, regular physical activity and education are key elements to the solution. We can set our children on a path toward a lifetime of good health helping them make smart choices about what eat, and how much exercise they get.

We need to help our kids stay healthy by encouraging them to get **active**. We need to reduce their time in front of the TV or computer screen. We need to get them moving, through everyday activities, like taking a walk or helping out with yard work. Most importantly, we need to set an example for our kids – by eating healthy and getting active **with** them. No matter what we say, our kids will notice and emulate what we do.
I don’t mean to suggest that these goals are the easiest in the world to achieve – and there are barriers, within families, schools and communities, to achieving these goals. It’s going to take a concerted, committed, community-wide effort for us to safeguard the health of our children. And the investment won’t be insignificant. But I tend to believe – and I’m sure you’ll agree – that no investment in our children can ever be too much. They’re both our legacy – and our responsibility.

“Your lives will be better than ours” – it’s the unspoken promise that our parents made to us, that their parents made to them – it’s the promise each generation has made to the next, throughout history. We owe it to our children, to ensure that they live longer, healthier, and stronger than us. More importantly, we owe it to ourselves. Can we really be content being the first generation in history that failed to deliver on that promise? Our children deserve a healthy start – and neither our ability, nor our responsibility, to give it to them is in question.

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