



City of Long Beach

Office of Robert Garcia **R-14**
Councilmember, First District

Date: February 7, 2012

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Councilmember Robert Garcia, First District *RG*
Vice Mayor Suja Lowenthal, Second District *SL*
Councilmember James Johnson, Seventh District *JJ*

Subject: Move Long Beach Initiative

Background:

Obesity constitutes a public health crisis at both the local and national level. While obesity is one of the leading contributors to poor health outcomes and increased health care costs nationally, in Long Beach the problem is especially dire. Obesity rates are significantly higher in low-income areas, and especially among African-Americans and Latinos.

Last year, the Press-Telegram reported on a study that looked at obesity rates of over 5,000 Long Beach Unified students. Among the key findings:

- More than 30% of 5th graders, 35% of 7th graders, and 21% of 9th graders are obese.
- Neighborhoods with high concentrations of mini markets and liquor stores have higher obesity rates.
- Youth in some North and West Long Beach neighborhoods had the highest obesity rates at 37%.
- Youth in East Long Beach, where there is more access to park space and healthier food alternatives, had the lowest obesity rate at 8%.

The Long Beach obesity rate is an epidemic and a health crisis.

The City of Long Beach should do all it can to encourage exercise, nutritious food, and healthful lifestyle choices. Long Beach is making efforts on many fronts to promote healthy lifestyles, including the recently enacted Neighborhood Store Partnership, the North Long Beach Kaiser Health Grant, a policy to add healthier beverages to vending machines on City property which is in the process of being finalized, and a HEAL Cities Resolution being considered by Council. In addition, Long Beach is promoting healthful lifestyles by building new parks and community gardens, creating a more bike-friendly city, and replacing aging infrastructure that limits walkability.

Early last year, First Lady Michelle Obama launched the *Let's Move!* campaign to help address childhood obesity comprehensively, including through the promotion of active lifestyles through exercise and healthful eating. Some of the accomplishments in the first year of the *Let's Move!* initiative include the commitment of three of the nation's largest food service providers to meeting recommended levels of fat, sugar and whole grains over the next five years, and doubling the fruits and vegetables they serve over the next 10 years; a commitment by the Fruit

and Vegetable Alliance, the Food, Family and Farming Foundation and the United Fresh Produce Association to put 6,000 salad bars in schools across the country; a significant increase in pediatricians screening children for Body Mass Index (BMI), and a pledge by The American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Academy of Family Physicians to have 100% of their doctors screen for BMI; and the *Let's Move Faith and Communities* project, in which faith-based and community-based organizations have committed to walk three million miles and host 10,000 community gardens or farmers markets.

Inspired by the First Lady's efforts, the Long Beach City Council passed legislation to support the National *Let's Move!* campaign last year.

There are currently numerous health grants available and many more being developed for cities interested in promoting healthy activities and lifestyles. Long Beach has an opportunity to incorporate a strong community physical fitness initiative into the organizing of its broader health efforts. In the same way we are working to become "America's Most Bike Friendly City," Long Beach should strive to become one of America's Healthiest Cities.

Long Beach is in the process of updating its General Plan. The Mobility Element of the General Plan speaks to creating a mobile and active city. Our Move Long Beach physical fitness and health initiatives should be included in the Mobility Element along with our other ongoing health initiatives, ensuring they remain an important part of the City's long term planning. City Management has indicated that they are interested in adding our Move Long Beach and Health Initiatives into the Mobility Element.

Recommended Actions:

Direct the City Manager to work with the Long Beach Health Department, and the Department of Parks & Recreation to:

- Organize our "Move Long Beach" Initiatives, and place them in the Mobility Element of the Long Beach General Plan.
- Create an online resource that offers information and promotes major health resources and events like the Long Beach Marathon, Long Beach Triathlon, and Bike Tour.
- Encourage Councilmembers, city departments, and community groups to host "Move Long Beach" events and campaigns in the city that promote exercise, physical fitness, and health awareness in 2012 and beyond.

Fiscal Impact:

There would be minor administrative costs. A healthier community has the potential to dramatically lower the health care and lost productivity costs to the public.