

# kchealthykids™

Community Solutions to Reduce Childhood Obesity

January 27, 2012

Chairman Dwayne Umbarger and Members of the Senate Transportation Committee  
Re: Senate Resolution 1805, Livable Streets

Dear Senator Umbarger and Members of the Senate Transportation Committee:

KC Healthy Kids strongly supports SR 1805. A Livable Streets Resolution will support a transportation network that is designed for all users, including pedestrians of all ages and abilities, bicyclists, and people with disabilities.

KC Healthy Kids (KCHK) is a public charitable foundation developing and advancing community solutions to reduce childhood obesity. To achieve our mission, we inform, advocate, and mobilize local resources and talents to improve the food and physical environments which foster healthy eating and active living.

KC Healthy Kids supports SR 1805 because streets that promote physical activity play an important role in decreasing childhood obesity. In the past four decades, national obesity rates among children ages six to 11 have increased fourfold and more than 23 million children and teenagers are now overweight or obese. The Trust for America's Health reports that in 2011 the obesity rate in Kansas was 29% for adults and 16% for children. This makes Kansas the 16<sup>th</sup>-most obese state in the nation for adults and the 18<sup>th</sup>-most obese state for children. This epidemic is also associated with rising rates of serious medical conditions in children, including Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease and stroke.

Research has shown a significant correlation between obesity rates for children and adults and the ability of people to walk, ride a bike, or use other modes of "active transportation" (Bassett, 2008). In cities and states where active transportation is more available, like Denver and Oregon, people are healthier and obesity rates are lower.

It is not a coincidence that childhood obesity has increased while the physical environment around us has become singularly focused on moving cars. In our focus on moving cars, we have sacrificed what should be natural opportunities for children to move and play throughout the day. Children and teenagers should be able to safely walk to school or a friend's house or bike to the park. A young child should be able to pull his red wagon down a sidewalk in front of his house, but he can't do that if there is no sidewalk. Families should be able to walk together to reach a favorite destination, but to do so, there must be safe places to walk and cross the streets. Changing the design of our transportation system to encourage physical movement is better for moving traffic too. Livable streets have been shown to reduce accidents and traffic jams.

To be most effective, Livable Streets policies must be adopted at the local, regional, state and federal levels of government. In Kansas, State Highways are often the main roads running through small towns and connecting residents to commercial areas. Presently, many of these roads are designed for automobile travel only. A Kansas Livable Streets policy will demonstrate a commitment to alleviate this problem. Finally, by passing this Resolution, the State is taking a leadership role that will influence additional cities in Kansas and other states to also establish Livable Streets policies. Thank you in advance for supporting SR 1805.

Sincerely,



Samara N. Klein, J.D.  
Advocacy Director, KC Healthy Kids