

## Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust Board of Directors' Resolution Update: Support Policies to Reduce Obesity

August 2023

**WHEREAS**, the Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust (TSET) was created by voters in 2000 and has a constitutional mandate to support strategies and programs designed to maintain or improve the health of Oklahomans; and

**WHEREAS**, Oklahoma ranks 45<sup>th</sup> in health rankings amongst the U.S. and places 46<sup>th</sup> in adult obesity prevalence;<sup>1</sup> and

**WHEREAS**, obesity is an increasing health epidemic, 32% of Americans and 39% of Oklahomans are considered obese<sup>2</sup> and 32% of Oklahoma's children ages 10-17 are obese or overweight;<sup>3</sup> and

**WHEREAS**, being obese or overweight is linked to poor health outcomes and chronic diseases including gallbladder and liver disease, heart disease, high blood pressure, osteoarthritis, sleep apnea, type 2 diabetes, stroke and cancer;<sup>4</sup> and

**WHEREAS**, healthcare costs directly attributed to obesity in Oklahoma annually exceed \$1.7 billion.<sup>4</sup> There are several contributing factors that lead to obesity, including poor diet, sedentary lifestyle and other social-ecological factors; and

**WHEREAS**, to reduce obesity and improve the health of all Oklahomans, a whole community and prevention-oriented approach to solving the obesity epidemic should be taken; and

**WHEREAS**, the approach should involve ensuring all Oklahomans have access to nutritious food, places to be physically active, safe water to drink, adequate sleep, limited screen time; and

**WHEREAS**, within a whole community approach, community groups, lawmakers, schools, childcare workers, employers, health care providers, public health professionals, and residents work together to support and promote healthy lifestyles and create settings that prevent and reduce obesity. Together they can help reduce barriers to healthy activities, improve access to health-promoting choices, advance fiscal and social resources, and build the collective capacity in communities to achieve their full health potential; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2022 the Oklahoma State Department of Health released a plan to help reduce obesity in our state by outlining a comprehensive plan to combat obesity;<sup>5</sup> and

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/measures/Obesity>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/brfss/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://oklahoma.gov/content/dam/ok/en/health/health2/documents/State%20of%20Oklahoma%20-%20State%20Obesity%20Prevention.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/weight-management/adult-overweight-obesity/health-risks>

<sup>5</sup> <https://oklahoma.gov/content/dam/ok/en/health/health2/documents/State%20of%20Oklahoma%20-%20State%20Obesity%20Prevention.pdf>

**WHEREAS**, TSET supports this plan and has several grants, including the Healthy Living Program, Healthy Incentive Grants, Discovery Grants, and Built Environment Grants that work to reduce obesity by improving community infrastructure and supporting health promoting programs, wellness policies, physical activity, food access and health education that work to reduce obesity; and

**WHEREAS**, TSET's communications interventions work to promote healthy behaviors to reduce obesity. This counteracts fast food, sugary drink and candy advertising and provides accurate information about healthy lifestyle choices; and

**WHEREAS**, a \$1 million grant was recently awarded to the TSET Healthy Promotion Research Center at Stephenson Cancer Center to research complex factors that lead to obesity.

**BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED**, the TSET Board of Directors respectfully encourages the public and state and local leaders to embrace policies that reduce obesity by encouraging active lifestyles and health promoting dietary choices, and programs that teach wellness and healthy behaviors.

**FURTHERMORE, BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED**, the TSET Board of Directors supports efforts to:

- Ensure that all Oklahomans to have access to a healthy diet.
- Pass governmental policies at the local or statewide level that encourage the prevention and reduction of obesity.
- Encourage workplaces to help employees to live healthy lifestyles.
- Reduce food insecurity by improving access to healthy, affordable, and culturally appropriate foods in neighborhoods and rural areas with limited options.
- Achieve adequate food security for communities facing barriers.
- Encourage communities to plant community gardens, increase safe access to recreational facilities, and provide nutritional information on menu items and education about how to change unhealthy behaviors;<sup>6</sup>
- Provide more nutrition or physical activity related health communication to educate the public about making healthier choices and utilizing food assistance, or other support programming.
- Assist schools in providing health education and planting school gardens.
- Create more opportunities for active physical activity at schools during recess, physical education and in afterschool programs.
- Improve the nutritional environment in schools by using the Smarter Lunchroom Checklist, USDA's smart snack guidelines, more time to consume meals and improve access for summer meals.<sup>7</sup>
- Expand access to physical activities for all Oklahomans.
- Encourage childcare providers, parents and schools to engage children in active play.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://shapeyourfutureok.com/overweight-obesitys-impact-oklahoma/health-actions/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://oklahoma.gov/content/dam/ok/en/health/health2/documents/State%20of%20Oklahoma%20-%20State%20Obesity%20Prevention.pdf>

- Create healthier childcare and afterschool environments and programs.<sup>8</sup>
- Support programs that provide statewide fitness assessment data to have an accurate depiction of where the highest need for obesity reduction measures exist.
- Help communities and neighborhoods to have low-cost physical activity opportunities to create a more active environment, particularly by improving pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure.
- Educate about the importance of drinking water and how sugar sweetened beverages can contribute to obesity. Encourage schools and communities to adopt policies to improve and expand safe drinking water access.
- Curtail exposure to unhealthy food and drink advertising.
- Limit screen time, particularly among children at home and in childcare settings.
- Encourage enough sleep.
- Support healthcare providers to educate patients on the importance of reducing obesity by maintaining a healthy diet and physically active lifestyle.
- Increase participation in clinical food incentive referral programs to farmers markets.<sup>9</sup>

**FURTHERMORE, BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED**, the TSET Board of Directors calls on the Oklahoma Legislature to pass policies in support of these aims such as:

- Repealing the state sales tax on healthy foods.
- Funding health education and physical activity courses for all Oklahoma public school students.
- Funding and supporting Complete Streets, Safe Routes to Schools and other active transportation measures.
- Supporting farmers markets, investment in new grocery stores in rural or low-income areas, farm-to-school programs, community gardens and other initiatives that promote local agriculture and access to healthy food.
- Increasing eligibility for free school meals.
- Working to reduce food insecurity and increase access to healthy food choices communities

**FURTHERMORE, BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED**, the TSET Board of Directors respectively recommends the adoption of the aforementioned policies and strategies to prevent and reduce obesity and to improve the health and wellbeing of Oklahomans.

**THE TSET BOARD OF DIRECTORS** hereby calls upon other interested groups and governing bodies to adopt similar resolutions.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://choicesproject.org/actionkit/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://oklahoma.gov/content/dam/ok/en/health/health2/documents/State%20of%20Oklahoma%20-%20State%20Obesity%20Prevention.pdf>