

Gov. signs bill eliminating trans-fats in school meals

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

Governor John Hickenlooper signed SB-12-068 Monday, June 4, which requires the elimination of industrially produced trans-fats such as vegetable shortening, margarine or any type of partially hydrogenated vegetable oil that contains more than zero grams of trans-fat per serving.

Schools will not be permitted to serve a food that contains any industrially produced trans-fat in the preparation of a food item or beverage that is intended for consumption by a student in public elementary, middle or high school.

The bill requires the elimination of trans-fats in any meal provided by the school, such as breakfasts, a la carte items, vending machines and after-school snacks.

A healthy school environment helps improve children's physical well-being, enhances learning, minimizes behavior problems and increases attendance.

Children who start as young as age 3 or 4 eating a steady diet of fast food and other trans-fat laden foods such as snack foods and baked goods can be expected to have a higher risk of getting heart disease at an earlier age than kids who are eating foods without trans-fats.

When schools offer healthy options such as trans-fat free foods, children are less likely to buy unhealthy snacks. Additionally, well-nourished, healthy children are more likely to achieve academic success.

The American Heart Association (AHA) is supporting efforts to eliminate trans-fats in Colorado school food programs. The AHA has long recognized the consumption of trans-fats as a health risk to Americans and has worked to encourage their removal from the restaurant and food industry.

Colorado is known as the leanest state in the country. Unfortunately that is rapidly changing as the rates of childhood obesity are steadily increasing. According to the Colorado Children's Campaign, 2012 Kids Count report, 26 percent of Colorado children ages 2-14 are overweight

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or obese, and in some counties the percentage reaches over 40 percent.

The consequences of this scary statistic are severe, and in some cases, lifelong. Obese children are at elevated risk for high blood pressure and cholesterol, type 2 diabetes and heart disease and are more likely to be obese as adults. It's the job of adult citizens to protect their children and do what they can to create a safe and healthy environment for them, both at home and at school.

A healthy school environment not only helps to improve children's physical well-being, it also enhances learning, minimizes behavior problems and increases attendance.

People must stand up for health and well-being of their children. Additionally, they must model a healthier lifestyle and teach children the importance of nutrition and exercise. The risk of heart disease must be reduced in the future business and community leaders.

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