



HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

January 27, 2010

HB 1479

Screening of body mass index (BMI) in selected school grades to help prevent childhood obesity

Testimony

Good afternoon, Madam Chair and members of the Committee. My name is Leslie Melby, and I am the Vice President for State Government Relations at the New Hampshire Hospital Association, representing the state's 32 acute care community and specialty hospitals.

I am here to testify in support of HB 1479. New Hampshire does not have a statewide system to track the prevalence of unhealthy weight in children and youth. Body Mass Index (BMI) is a number calculated from a child's weight and height. BMI is a reliable indicator. It is an inexpensive and easy-to-perform method of screening for weight categories that may lead to health problems. For children and teens, BMI is age- and sex-specific and is often referred to as BMI-for-age.

Hospitals and the health professionals who work in hospitals see and treat many of the chronic disease problems associated with unhealthy weight among children and adults. Treating chronic diseases is very costly and often leads to time missed from school or work. Reversing the epidemic of obesity requires all sectors of our society to work together to employ different prevention strategies that address the problem. HB 1479 proposes a key component in dealing with this challenge by creating a method for us to collectively monitor and measure statewide progress.

On behalf of New Hampshire's hospitals, I urge you to pass HB 1479.

Thank you.