

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

August 27, 2020

**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 places 46<sup>th</sup> in health rankings amongst the United States<sup>1</sup>, in part because of its low ranking on the health indicator regarding obesity; and

**WHEREAS**, obesity is an increasing health epidemic, with one in three Americans and 35%<sup>2</sup> of Oklahomans were obese as of 2019, including seven out of 10 adults in Oklahoma that are either overweight or obese; 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 thirteen types of cancer;<sup>3</sup> and

**WHEREAS**, healthcare costs directly attributed to obesity in Oklahoma annually exceed \$1.7 billion;<sup>4</sup> and

**WHEREAS**, to reduce these costs 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 to 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.

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

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/annual/state/OK/view/adjust-my-rank>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/annual/measure/Obesity/state/OK>

<sup>3</sup> <https://shapethefutureok.com/overweight-obesitys-impact-oklahoma/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://shapethefutureok.com/overweight-obesitys-impact-oklahoma/>

**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 that encourage the prevention and reduction of obesity.
- Encourage workplaces to help employees to be healthier.
- Improve access to healthy, affordable, and culturally appropriate foods in neighborhoods and rural areas with limited options.
- Achieve adequate food security for low income populations.
- 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>5</sup>
- Assist schools in providing more physical activity, healthier food, health education and planting school gardens.
- Improve access to physical activities for all Oklahomans.
- Encourage childcare providers and parents to engage children in active play and to play with other children.
- 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. Also, encourage schools and communities to adopt policies to improve and expand safe drinking water access.
- Limit screen time, particularly among children.
- Encourage enough sleep.
- Support healthcare providers to educate patients on the importance of a healthy diet and lifestyle.

**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 sales tax on healthy foods.
- Funding health education and physical activity courses for all Oklahoma public school students.
- Payment for clinical obesity-related prevention and treatment visits.
- 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.
- Working to reduce food insecurity and increase access to healthy food choices in Oklahoma communities.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://shapeyourfutureok.com/overweight-obesitys-impact-oklahoma/health-actions/>

**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.