

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 21, 2010

Mrs. Michelle Obama
First Lady of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mrs. Obama:

Thank you for championing the health and welfare of our nation's children through Let's Move. Let's Move has brought historic attention to the importance of addressing one the most serious public health concerns of today. Although we applaud that you mentioned eating disorders during a recent Let's Move event, we believe that broadening Let's Move's focus to include information about eating disorders would enhance the campaign's mission to improve the mental and physical health of all children.

We understand that obesity and eating disorders have distinct health impacts, and believe that the prevalence of these disorders indicates the need for comprehensive and well-coordinated interventions that support healthier habits and environments. Like obesity, unhealthy weight loss measures, anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, binge eating and eating disorders not otherwise specified (EDNOS) have increased significantly over the past few decades. In fact, more than 11 million men, women and children suffer from an eating disorder in the United States.

In a speech that publicly introduced Let's Move, you stated that unhealthy diets and habits can negatively influence physical, emotional and educational development and well-being. Eating disorders are no exception. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found that undernourishment impacts a student's ability to excel academically, and suicide, anxiety and depression are more common in people with eating disorders. Eating disorders also have the highest mortality rate of all mental illnesses, and can result in long-term health issues including heart and kidney failure, cognitive impairment, muscle atrophy and sudden death.

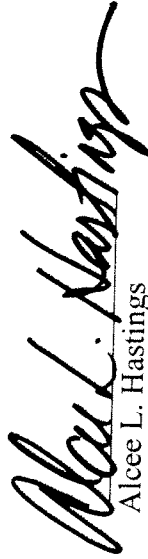
Like obesity, eating disorders afflict children of different ages, genders, economic backgrounds, and ethnicities. At least 30-40 percent of junior high students have reported dieting, over half of high-school girls have reported dieting, and 25 percent of bulimia and anorexia cases are men. What's more, student athletes can be especially vulnerable to eating disorders because some adopt unhealthy dietary restrictions and weight loss methods to eating or maintain a certain weight for competition. Many obese individuals resort to unhealthy weight loss tactics and may develop eating disorders in an attempt to achieve a desired weight or body image.

Strong environmental, cultural, social factors have contributed to the high rates of obesity and eating disorders in the United States. Stigma, blame and misinformation often accompany these conditions. Coordinated efforts among educators, elected officials, parents, community leaders and young people are crucial to executing sustainable solutions to these public health problems. We believe that Let's Move's mission is compatible with messages and interventions that are designed to address eating disorders.

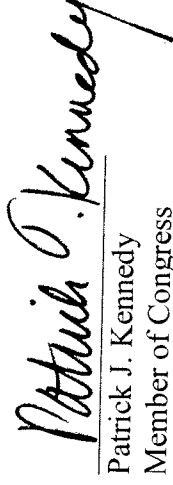
Educators could incorporate information about unhealthy dieting when providing information about healthy food choices. Speeches and parental toolkits could include information about risks, signs and support networks for eating disorders. Let's Move programs could be designed to teach children to respect body size diversity, promote self esteem, and support body satisfaction. And, the Let's Move Web site could include a link to the Office of Women's Health Web site which has comprehensive and evidence based information on eating disorders.

The unprecedented leadership in the battle against obesity through Let's Move shows your commitment to creatively and aggressively improving the health of children, families and communities. We hope that you will take our suggestions into consideration so that Let's Move can take a more holistic approach to addressing the full spectrum of behaviors that are compromising the health of America's children.

Sincerely,



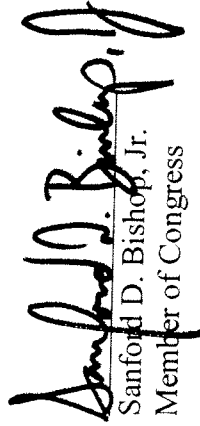
Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress



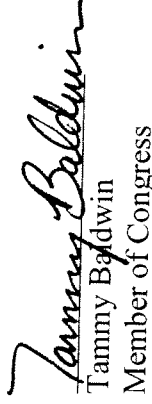
Patrick J. Kennedy
Member of Congress



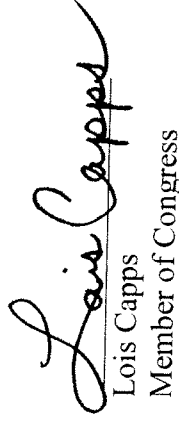
Michael A. Arcuri
Member of Congress



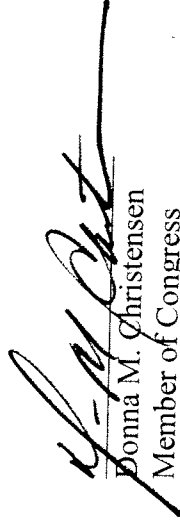
Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.
Member of Congress



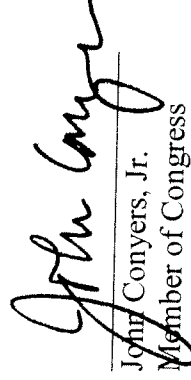
Tammy Baldwin
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This letter is supported by the following organizations : *Eating Disorders Coalition, American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Academy for Eating Disorders, A Chance to Heal, American Dance Therapy Association, American Group Psychotherapy Association, Anxiety Disorders Association of America, Avalon Hills Residential Eating Disorder Programs, Binge Eating Disorders Association, Cedar Associates, Center for Eating Disorders at Sheppard Pratt, Clinical Social Work Association, EDReferral.com, The Emily Program, F.E.A.S.T., Gail R. Schoenbach FREED Foundation, Gurze Books, Maudsley Parents, Mental Health America, MentorCONNECT, Monte Nido Treatment Center, Multi-Services Eating Disorder Association, National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Eating Disorders, National Eating Disorders Association, Pennsylvania Education Network for Eating Disorders, Renfrew Center, School Social Work Association of America, and The Emily Program Foundation*