# 21st Century Policy Solutions to Childhood Obesity:

## A Pragmatic Approach for Combating the Childhood Obesity Epidemic in Michigan

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**Introduction**

The United States of America, with more than one third of children and adolescents overweight and obese in 2010, has a problem with childhood obesity[1]. The State of Michigan is no better, and is not getting any better with present system. With a static 12% obesity rate in high school students since 2003[2], the policies that are currently in place to avoid and combat childhood obesity have been proven completely useless. The overwhelming obesity rate amongst the children of Michigan leads to other problems in the long run. Poor nutrition is the root cause of chronic diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, and numerous cancers. These chronic diseases risk high healthcare costs not only for the parents of the children, but the children themselves when they grow older[3]. The financial costs of obesity should not be underestimated. According to the Department of Health and Human Services, obesity costs American families, businesses and governments more than $115 billion yearly[4]. Thus, the rise of obesity is the root  High healthcare costs kill the economy of the United States, and without good reason as the increasing costs for the federal government are neither sustainable, nor producing the health outcomes they should[5]. The government's current budget is not cut out to sustain the growing healthcare costs.

Trying to avoid obesity by eating healthier foods breaks the bank as well. According to a study published in December 2013 from the *British Medical Journal*, the cost of eating healthier is roughly $550 more a year (per person)[6]. For one person, this is a sizeable chunk of change, but for a family of four the cost would go up to over $2000 per family per year. This is money that many Michiganders, especially those with families who are living paycheck to paycheck, cannot afford. In hundreds of neighborhoods across the country, nutritious, affordable, and high quality

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[1] Ogden, Cynthia, et.al. "Prevalence of obesity and trends in body mass index among US children and adolescents, 1999-2010." *Journal of the American Medical Association* 307, no. 5 (2012): 483-490.
[2] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Obesity Youth Over Time." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/obesity/obesity-youth.htm (accessed January 10, 2014).
[3] Kahan, Scott, and Susan Roberts. "Save Dollars, Improve Health with Better Options in School Food." Chef Ann. http://www.chefann.com/blog/archives/826 (accessed December 1, 2013).
[4] Kahan, Scott, and Susan Roberts. "Save Dollars, Improve Health with Better Options in School Food." Chef Ann. http://www.chefann.com/blog/archives/826 (accessed December 1, 2013).
[5] *Philadelphia Inquirer*, "Fixing Health Care- Democrats: We Must Hold Down Costs For Families and Provide Meaningful Coverage," June 21, 2009. http://www.philly.com/inquirer/opinion/20090621_Fixing_health_care.html (accessed December 8, 2013).
[6] Rao, Mayuree. "Do healthier foods and diet patterns cost more than less healthy options? A systematic review and meta-analysis." BMJ Open 3, no. 12 (2013).

food is out of reach – particularly low-income neighborhoods, communities of color, and rural areas[7].

There are not only economic implications to the obesity epidemic, but also moral and ethical considerations that are a pre-requisite to deciding the best anti-obesity policy option. Chronic diseases are the leading cause of death in the U.S.[8] and the costs attributable to obesity alone in 2012 equal an estimated 300,000 lives[9]. This does not take into account the numerous people who are living overweight and are having difficulty in, or being able to fully enjoy, their daily lives due to being overweight. The study on weight related quality of life for adolescents depicted the increase in a quality of life for those who were not overweight and obese[10]. In order to combat overweight and obesity among adolescents the following policy is proposed:

**Proposal**

The State of Michigan should increase food stamp benefits and substantially reduce state funds allocated towards private and state owned correctional facilities.

Since healthy foods are far more expensive than unhealthy food, food stamps are critical to improving impoverished diets[11]. According to Carol O'Neil, a professor of human ecology at LSU, "It is almost impossible for the average food stamp recipient, who gets about $270 a month, to eat according to dietary recommendations."[12] Not only is the current food stamp budget ineffective in providing healthy foods for the people that need it, but according to the University of Washington Center for Public Health and Nutrition, as incomes drop and family budgets shrink, people shift toward cheaper, less healthy food. This is because, "Energy-rich starches, sweets, and fats, many of them nutrient-poor, frequently offer the cheapest way to fill

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[7] Treuhaft, Sarah and Allison Karpyn. "The Grocery Gap: Who Has Access to Health Food and Why It Matters." PolicyLink: 2010 page6.
[8] "Health Care Reform and Chronic Disease." PR Newswire. http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/health-care-reform-and-chronic-disease-62106472.html (accessed January 18, 2014).
[9] "Overweight and Obesity: Health Consequences." Surgeon General. http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/calls/obesity/fact_consequences.html (accessed January 19, 2014).
[10] Kolotkin, Ronette L., et.al. "Assessing Weight-Related Quality Of Life In Adolescents*." Obesity 14, no. 3 (2006): 448-457.
[11] Ridgeway, James. "Heritage Foundation on Hunger: Let Them Eat Broccoli." Mother Jones. http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2007/12/heritage-foundation-hunger-let-them-eat-broccoli?page=1%29 (accessed January 21, 2014).
[12] Chacko, Sarah. "Healthy, affordable food frequently hard to find for poor." The Advocate (Baton Rouge), May 10, 2009. http://www.2theadvocate.com/news/44646952.html (accessed January 10, 2014).

hungry stomachs,"[13] and that is what they deem to be their number one priority, filling their stomachs so that they do not starve. Yes, awareness is also needed in promoting the use of food stamps for healthier alternatives to the goods currently bought; however, knowledge alone is not enough to change behavior. Dr. Annrose Guarino, a professor of nutrition and food at the LSU AgCenter, has stated that, "'Environmental nudges' are a good way to encourage healthy eating. That means making fruits and vegetables available for snacking instead of chips and cookies. If we can start at a younger age, we can have a positive impact on childhood obesity."[14]

**Funding**

The state of Michigan spends 2 billion dollars a year on the Michigan Department of Corrections[15], and even though the percentage of inmates decreased by 15%, Michigan's budget remained steady. The Michigan's legislature has just recently agreed to fund the construction of a $60 million penitentiary. One of the core problems with the construction of this facility is that there is currently no demand for inmates at this particular location[16]. This sort of policy fuels the school to prison pipeline, and will be a net disadvantage to our state as it locks away more and more of our workforce[17]. Moreover, our reliance on the Michigan Department of Corrections is proving to be too big of an economic burden upon the state. The state of Michigan should be morally obligated to ending the school to prison pipeline. There is much more at stake than just childhood obesity. There are external implications that the state of Michigan can address by altering its anti-obesity efforts. The plan will be more likely to pass in front of a bipartisan state legislature. This is important when evaluating the best pragmatic proposal. This paper attempts to take the more pragmatic and realistic approach to addressing contemporary socio-economic issues. The funding for the proposal must come from somewhere, and the choice was made after

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[13] Drewnowski, Adam and Petra Eichelsdoerfer. "Can Low-Income Americans Afford a Healthy Diet?" University of Washington Center for Public Health Nutrition. March 2009.

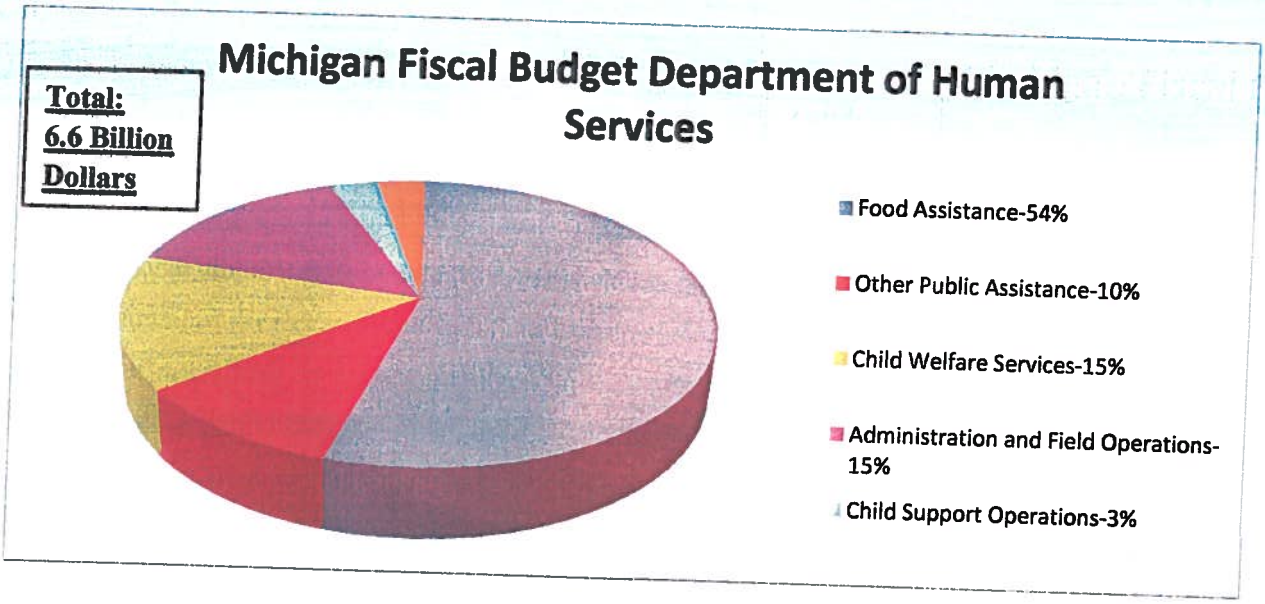
[14] Chacko, Sarah. "Healthy, affordable food frequently hard to find for poor." The Advocate (Baton Rouge), May 10, 2009. http://www.2theadvocate.com/news/44646952.html (accessed January 10, 2014).

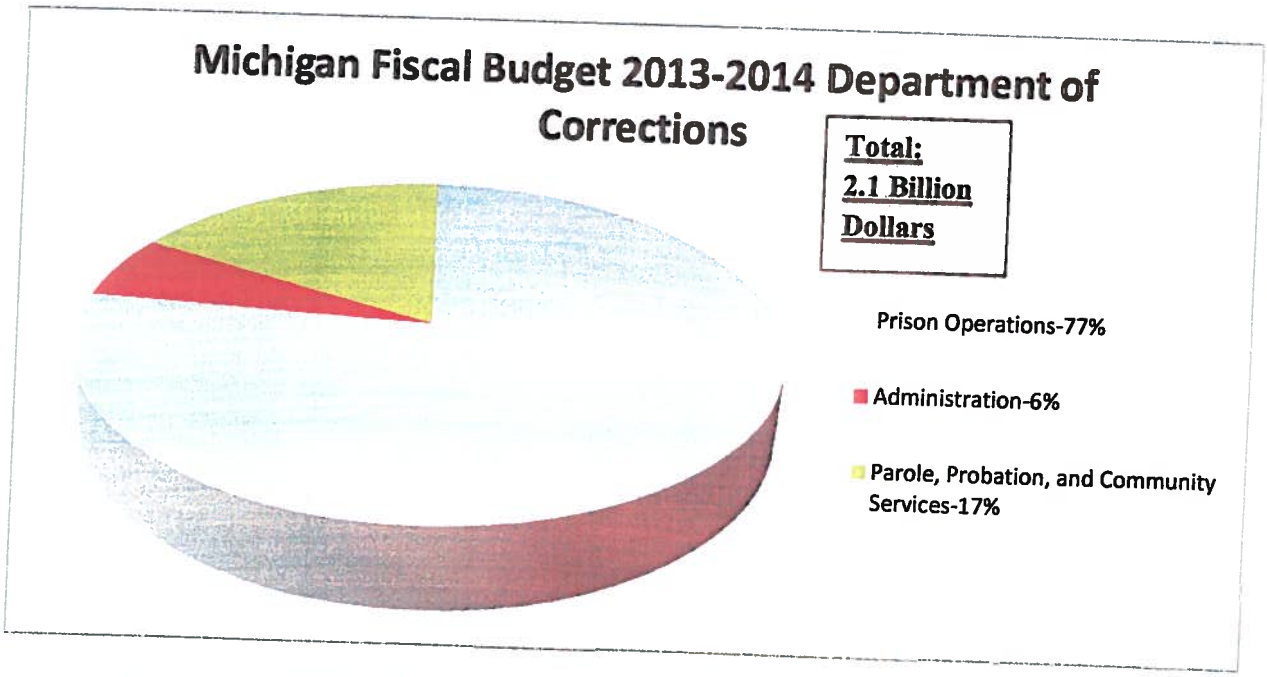
[15] Egan, . Detroit Free Press, "Michigan corrections costs remain high despite drop in inmates, staffing." Last modified 02 14, 2013. Accessed January 31, 2014. http://www.freep.com/article/20130214/NEWS15/302140134/Michigan-corrections-costs-remain-high-despite-drop-in-inmates-staffing.

[16] Kirkham, . Huffington Post, "Michigan Private Prisons Law Could Reopen Facility With Checkered Past." Last modified 01 12, 2013. Accessed January 31, 2014. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/01/12/michigan-private-prisons-_n_2453117.html.

[17] MCCD, . Micigan Council on Crime and Delinquency, "ARCHIVE FOR SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE." Last modified 11 05, 2013. Accessed January 31, 2014. http://www.miccd.org/category/school-to-prison-pipeline/.

careful ethical and economic considerations. Through a cost benefit analysis framework, the evidence concludes that there will only be a risk that the proposal strengthens the Michigan economy. In an era of mass incarceration, state legislatures should take it upon themselves to abandon these unethical politics that severely hurts the international credibility of the United States.



## State Economy Benefits

Not only would a revitalization of the food stamp program increase the amount of healthy food on the tables of people all across Michigan, but it would also provide a much needed boost to the state's economy. Food stamps are one of the keys to immediate short-term growth in the economy as 97% of the benefits are redeemed within a month. The money from the program percolates quickly through the economy. The U.S. Department of Agriculture calculates that for every $5 of food stamp spending, there is $9.20 of total economic activity. While other stimulus money is known to be slow to circulate, the food stamp boost is almost immediate[18] as grocers and farmers pay their employees and suppliers, who in turn shop and pay their bills.

There are families who are just scraping by when it comes to food for their members[19]. As more and more farmers improve their ability to accept food stamps, such as fruit vendors at local farmer's markets now having swipe machines at their booths, the already high effectiveness of food stamps as an economic stimulus is improved even more. By increasing food stamp spending now, an automatic stabilizer is created for the economy. During recessions, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and other food assistance program spending automatically increases. Automatic stabilizers have the advantage that they operate precisely when the economy is weak without the need for legislative action[20]. This allows for the programs to continue functioning efficiently even when there is an economic recession and possibly too much clash in the legislature for the time and energy to be put in to help those in need.

## Obesity Implications

When looking at obesity, one must identify who are the people that are clearly impacted the most by it. David Ludwig, M.D., the founding director of the Optimal Weight for Life and Harold Pollack, Ph.D., the faculty chair of the Center for Health Administration Studies, indicate

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[18] Thurow, Roger, and Timothy Martin. "Boost in Food-Stamp Funding Percolates Through Economy." Wall Street Journal (New York), July 7, 2009. http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB124691958931402479?mod=googlenews_wsj&mg=reno64-wsj&url=http%3A%2F%2Fonline.wsj.com%2Farticle%2FSB124691958931402479.html%3Fmod%3Dgooglenews_wsj (accessed January 20, 2014).

[19] Gilbert, Sarah. "Food stamps: The most efficient stimulus?." Wallet Pop. http://www.walletpop.com/blog/2009/07/08/food-stamps-the-most-efficient-stimulus/ (accessed January 18, 2014).

[20] Elmendorf, Douglas W. "The State of the Economy and Issues in Developing an Effective Policy Response: Before the Committee on the Budget U.S. House of Representatives". Congressional Budget Office: Washington, D.C. 2009

in their article for the Journal of the American Medical Association that obesity uniquely afflicts the poor[21]. Their research draws upon the work done by Donald Rose who stated that food insecurity, heightened in times of economic uncertainty, increases obesity risk through complex dietary and psychosocial mechanisms[22]. It is not only the physical financial status that endangers poorer people to be obese, but also the mental state of being poor and how that affects their choices in being full verse being healthy.

Now, since obesity is a problem mainly for financially challenged people, it should not be very effective on the people, and children, of Michigan, right? Well, according to the Center for Educational Performance and Information (CEPI), using the data collected in the fall of 2012 (for the 2012-13 school year), roughly 48% of the students in the public school system were eligible for reduced or free lunches[23]. This is a disgraceful number and proves that this is definitely a Michigan-sensitive issue. If one were to look at Detroit, they could see that, according to the Center for Disease Control, the obesity percentage overall for the city is 30.9% which makes it the 5th most obese city in the nation[24]. There is a direct correlation between having a top city in the state that is the 5th most obese in that nation having the children in the public school system being food insecure. Those that argue otherwise are ignorant.

There are suggestions that poorer people buy rice, pasta, and beans, but that presupposes that they have resources for capital investment for future meals – these healthy staples come in large bags – a kitchen, pots, pans, utensils, gas, electricity, a refrigerator, a home with rent paid, the time to cook (since healthy rice and beans can take hours). Not everybody have these resources, they cannot be taken for granted. Buying a doughnut for dinner does not involve any of those middle-class resources. After paying 55 cents, they are done. Yes, rice would be cheaper

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[21] Ludwig, D. S., and H. A. Pollack. "Obesity And The Economy: From Crisis To Opportunity." JAMA: The Journal of the American Medical Association 301, no. 5 (2009): 533-535.
[22] Rose, Donald. "Economic determinants and dietary consequences of food insecurity in the United States." Journal of Nutrition 129, no. 2 (1999): 517-520.
[23] "Free and Reduced Lunch Counts." CEPI - Free and Reduced Lunch Counts. http://www.michigan.gov/cepi/0,1607,7-113-21423_30451_36965---,00.html (accessed January 17, 2014).
[24] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Data and Statistics." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/data/childhood.html (accessed January 20, 2014).

if only people had the time and were not working two jobs on minimum wage[25]. Time, money, and kitchen resources are things that cannot be taken for granted.

The final thing that needs to be discussed is the price per calorie intake that needs to be calculated when low-income families are buying food. This factor contributes to the coexistence of obesity and food insecurity because of the need for low-income families to stretch their food money as far as possible. Without adequate resources for food, families must make decisions to maximize the number of calories they can buy so that their members do not suffer from frequent hunger[26]. Costing only $1-$1.29 and available at 631 locations in Michigan alone[27], a McDonald's McDouble cheeseburger has 390 calories, half a daily serving of protein, 7% of daily fiber, 11% of daily iron, and 20% of daily calcium[28]. It is one of the cheapest, yet most bountiful foods that have existed in human history. Other junk foods can cost as little as $1.76 per 1,000 calories, whereas fresh veggies and the like cost more than 10 times as much. A 2,000-calorie day of meals would, if you stuck strictly to the good-for-you stuff, cost roughly $36[29].

As stated in the introduction, the loss of life caused by obesity and the chronic diseases that follow as effects of obesity are abysmal. Thus, the rapid rise in obesity rates will cause a "pulse event" of mortality in the United States – akin to the large number of deaths caused by an influenza pandemic or a war, but spread out over the next four or five decades[30]. Not only will the number of deaths increase, but the average life expectancy will decrease. A study published by the *New England Journal of Medicine* stated that being obese reduces a person's life expectancy by nearly 13 years. It goes the distance to say that even eliminating a major disease such as cancer would not counter the negative consequences for life expectancy caused by the

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[25] Drewnowski, Adam, and SE Specter. "Poverty and obesity: the role of energy density and energy costs." American Society for Clinical Nutrition 79, no. 1 (2004): 6-16.

[26] Troy, Lisa M. et.al. "Hunger and Obesity: Understanding a Food Insecurity Paradigm". Institute of Medicine of the National Academies: Washington, D.C. 2011.

[27] "McDonald's Locations." Menuism. http://www.menuism.com/restaurant-locations/mcdonalds-21019 (accessed January 21, 2014).

[28] "McDouble" McDonalds. http://www.mcdonalds.com/us/en/food/product_nutrition.sandwiches.465.mcdouble.html (accessed January 21, 2014).

[29] Smith, Kyle. "The greatest food in human history." New York Post, July 28, 2013. http://nypost.com/2013/07/28/the-greatest-food-in-human-history/ (accessed January 20, 2014).

[30] Lalasz, Robert. "Will Rising Childhood Obesity Decrease U.S. Life Expectancy?." Will Rising Childhood Obesity Decrease U.S. Life Expectancy?. http://www.prb.org/Publications/Articles/2005/WillRisingChildhoodObesityDecreaseUSLifeExpectancy.aspx (accessed January 20, 2014).

waves of death. They will overwhelm the positive influences of technology[31]. This cut in life expectancy is unacceptable. This is not the end of it, either.

Even after the death toll and the cut in life expectancy, one has to factor in the quality of life. Aside from mortality rate, obesity substantially increases morbidity and impairs quality of life. Obesity is even more strongly related to morbidity and disability than mortality[32]. The quality of one's life is made up of other factors as well, such as their sense of safety. Poor nutrition kills both military recruitment and retention. The potential pool of recruits is decreased due to the increasing proportion of young adults who do not meet military entry standards for weight and in 2002, over 1,400 personnel were discharged after failing the body weight standard[33]. If the military that is supposed to be protecting the country is having washouts due to personnel failing the body weight standard, how is one supposed to feel safe?

**Exercise Fails**

The direct quote from earlier in this paper states that, "Knowledge alone is not enough to change behavior," and this needs to be regarded as imperative in the battle against obesity. One of the old believed methods to combat obesity has been through exercise, but that is false information. Exercise is only a way of treating the symptoms of a poor diet. Collected data has proven that even when exercise energy expenditure is high, a healthy diet is still required for weight loss to occur in many people[34]. Not only does exercise alone fail to stop obesity, it also fails to eliminate the death risks. Physical activity does not eliminate the potentially deadly health risks associated with obesity, just as being lean does not counteract the risks connected to low fitness levels[35]. A study was done to test whether higher levels of physical activity can counteract the elevated risk of death associated with adiposity (being overweight) and the

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[31] Olshansky, S. et.al. "A Potential Decline In Life Expectancy In The United States In The 21st Century." New England Journal of Medicine 352, no. 11 (2005): 1138-1145.
[32] Cafaro, Philip J., et.al. "The Fat Of The Land: Linking American Food Overconsumption, Obesity, And Biodiversity Loss." Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics 19, no. 6 (2006): 541-561.
[33] Almond, Nathaniel, et.al. "The Prevalence of Overweight and Obesity among U.S. Military Veterans." Military Medicine 173, no. 6 (2008): 544-549.
[34] Caudwell, Phillipa, et.al."Exercise Alone Is Not Enough: Weight Loss Also Needs A Healthy (Mediterranean) Diet?." Public Health Nutrition 12, no. 9A (2009): 1663.
[35] "Exercise Doesn't Eliminate Obesity Death Risks." Second Opinions. http://www.second-opinions.co.uk/exercise-chd.html#.Ut6PfxAo7IU (accessed January 21, 2014).

findings failed to support the theory that if one is fat, but physically fit, they do not have to worry about their weight because physical activity can cancel out the risk associated with obesity[36].

While exercise has its benefits, there are some people that it cannot help. Exercise does not affect the body structure of those that are inadequately nourished. The American Heart Association and the American College of Sports Medicine published joint guidelines for physical activity and health. They suggested that 30 minutes of moderate physical activity five days a week is necessary to promote and maintain health[37]. What it did not say, though, was that more physical activity will lead people to lose weight. Despite half a century of efforts to prove otherwise, scientists still cannot say, for a fact, that exercise will help keep off the pounds[38].

The policy suggested by this paper, while it does not have a focus on increasing exercise and access to proper exercise facilities and equipment, does include the need for it. As of October 2008, SNAP became the new name for the federal Food Stamp Program. The name, in itself, reflects the changes made to the program, including a focus on nutrition. It provides nutrition education in an attempt to improve the likelihood that SNAP participants will make healthy choices in choosing an active lifestyle[39]. By increasing SNAP benefits, the education will be better accessible as well as keep people from becoming confused about the relationship between exercise and weight loss. The programs advocated for in this paper call for people to choose active lifestyles, which include exercise, as a net benefit to the other parts of the plan.

**Policy Would Pass**

One of the important things to consider when crafting a policy that would go through the state legislature is whether or not it would actually pass. Yes, there are important policies and good ideas that should pass through the legislature, but they fail to do so. This is because they fail to survive in the current economic environment. The popularity of the food stamp program is known throughout the country because it keeps hundreds of thousands of people from starving, it

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[36] Hu, Frank B., et.al. "Adiposity As Compared With Physical Activity In Predicting Mortality Among Women." Obstetrical & Gynecological Survey 60, no. 5 (2005): 311-312.
[37] "Physical Activity and Public Health: Updated Recommenation for Adults From the American College of Sports Medicine and the American Heart Association". *Journal of the American Heart Association*. 2007.
[38] Taubes, Gary. "The scientist and the stairmaster: why most of us believe that exercise makes us thinner--and why we're wrong." *New Yorker Magazine*, October 1, 2007.
[39] "Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)." Food and Nutrition Service. http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap (accessed January 19, 2014).

is seen by many as a moral obligation to keep people who are less fortunate than them from slow starvation that ends in death.

In 2005, the United States Congress was poised to seal the fate of the poorest and most vulnerable Americans. The House and Senate were contemplating cuts in critical food stamp spending that would have left 300,000 people hungry with nowhere to turn. However, in record numbers, Americans made clear that the richest country in the world should not be balancing budget on the backs of the poor. In an independent poll commissioned by the Alliance to End Hunger, 92 percent of voters said they wanted to see Congress continue to fund anti-hunger programs. Not only that, but 75 percent said that, even in a tight budget year, the (then) Food Stamp Program should be protected from cuts[40]. It has been a supported view that the failing budget should not keep food from the mouths of starving people.

Not only is it a moral issue, but there is an economic advantage for passing. Providing food stamps strengthens the private sector food market. Direct distribution of food commodities establishes a parallel marketing system that draws some demand away from the private sector. Food stamps give purchasing power to poor consumers that they can use in private sector food stores. However, if the private food retailing system is inaccessible, a food stamp program may provide the demand needed to strengthen and improve the system[41]. There is no denying that the current Michigan legislature is all-in when it comes to supporting the private sector.

Typically, when people have issues against SNAP programs, it is because they believe that it allows lazy people to live off of society's dime. However, with the new community service bill (SB 276), they can stop worrying. The bill, passed by the State Senate on September 18, 2013[42], requires community service for people receiving government assistance. It is called common sense by Republicans (ones usually against increased SNAP funding) and nonsensical

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[40] Bridges, Jeff, and H. Eric Schockman. "Food stamps fill a critical need." seattlepi.com. http://www.seattlepi.com/local/opinion/article/Food-stamps-fill-a-critical-need-1186500.php (accessed January 21, 2014).

[41] Rogers, Beatrice Lorge and Jennifer Coates. "Food-Based Safety Nets and Related Programs". Social Protection Discussion Paper Series: September 2002.

[42] "Senate Bill 0276 (2013)." Michigan Legislature Page. http://www.legislature.mi.gov/(S(rwxwf22vlxvedunr3cooajqy))/mileg.aspx?page=BillStatus&objectname=2013-SB-0276 (accessed January 21, 2014).

by Democrats (ones usually for increased SNAP funding)[43], but allows Republicans to be more in favor of SNAP spending. This, should it be passed by the House and signed by Governor Snyder, would make the policy suggested in this paper more appealing to the majority of the legislature.

There is a current danger coming with regard to SNAP funding called the Rubio Block-grant. Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL) proposed to end most federal safety net programs (including SNAP) and replace them with one mega-block grant to the states. States would have near-total flexibility in using the funds. The proposal, though, would weaken the ability of SNAP to respond to recession, making it lose the "automatic stabilizer" status that was discussed earlier in the paper. No block-grant proposal has ever been designed for these programs that provide a full and prompt response. As a consequence, under the Rubio proposal, hardship would inevitably rise in many areas during recessions – likely by substantial amounts[44]. Should this gain traction and be discussed further, Michigan's legislature needs a policy in place that would allow it to not worry (unless the discussions grew more serious).

Some social problems are beyond the government's ability to solve; however this does not mean that the state government should not attempt to successfully facilitate a healthy transition in neighborhood stores. This facilitation does not need to include subsidization, nor will it require a costly info dissemination campaign. Our request upon the state would be to meet with local grocery store owners in Detroit to help the transition of a healthier inventory of food. Detroit should be the pilot program for Michigan's anti-obesity policies. Detroit is ranked as the fifth most obese city in the country. The percentage of Detroiters who are obese hovers around 30.4%[45]. This figure substantially adds to the overall problem of Michigan, and focusing on Detroit at first would be the best starting point to addressing the obesity epidemic.

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[43] Gray, Kathleen. "Mich. lawmakers: Do community service or lose welfare." USA Today (Tysons Corner), September 18, 2013. http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2013/09/18/community-service-for-welfare/2834157/ (accessed January 21, 2014).

[44] Parrott, Sharon. "Rubio Block-Grant Proposal Would Weaken Safety Net, Not Strengthen It." Off the Charts Blog. http://www.offthechartsblog.org/category/food-assistance/food-stamps/ (accessed January 21, 2014).

[45] CDC,WIN, . "Obesity Statistics." Last modified 11 23, 2013. Accessed January 31, 2014. http://www.statisticbrain.com/americas-most-obese-cities/.

## Conclusion

During times of national economic crises, an ideology that reflects a fiscal conservative should be adopted. Thus, the plan takes a significant financial burden that Michigan bears, and reallocates the funds so that there is a more efficient appropriation. The stark reality is that, the state of Michigan has the fifth most obese city in the country, and it is contributing to massive healthcare costs, that further stagnates the Michigan economy. The outline of this proposal suggests that Michigan re-appropriates funds from prisons, which currently do not detain any inmates, to SNAP benefits. This proposal is positive sum; meaning there is no risk of disadvantage to our proposal. By increasing the amount of state funds approved for SNAP benefits, and facilitating the increase of fresh fruit and produce, in the city of Detroit as part of a pilot program, Michigan can become a national innovator and model in combating the obesity epidemic plaguing this country.

The use of these re-allocated funds should be used solely with the increase in state SNAP benefits and the facilitation of fresh fruit and produce. This paper highlights the key correlative factor in childhood obesity, and that is the proximity of high fat and high sugar foods. There must be a combination of increased funds available to those that qualify because our evidence indicates that currently in the status quo; there is not enough food to eat along the dietary recommendations provided by dieticians. The state of Michigan should make healthier food more accessible to low income populations by facilitating the availability of fresh fruit and produce to nearby community stores. Our proposal is the best and most pragmatic way to facilitate the change in unhealthy inventories at local food stores in low income neighborhoods as well as ensuring that those that are food insecure receive the nutritious intake that they need.