



Start early to win fight against fat

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The U.S. Department of Agriculture's shift from the food pyramid to MyPlate is a wise move given that, as a nation, we must take aggressive steps to help combat obesity. Research shows that getting Americans to eat better and lose weight not only can improve the nation's health but also boost the bottom lines for businesses across America.

Consider this: Research reported in the journal Health Affairs shows that health care costs for obese adults have doubled in 10 years and are now estimated at \$147 billion, accounting for nearly 10 percent of total annual U.S. health care costs. For businesses in Albany and nationwide, controlling these costs is critically important. U.S. businesses pay \$13 billion annually in health insurance claims, paid sick leave and disability and life insurance, all related to weight problems, according to the [American Journal of](#)

[Health Promotion](#). Lowering these costs should be a top priority.

To win the fight against fat, we must start early, and the nation's new child nutrition law passed by Congress last year is an important start. Many children get half of their daily calories from school meals, but the vast majority of meals served in our schools do not meet nutrition standards, largely because of funding problems.

Congress can help combat childhood obesity by supporting the [USDA](#) in updating school meal standards and providing schools the support they need to update kitchen equipment and train cafeteria workers. It's a win-win: helping our kids and our economy.

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