



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

News Release

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**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII
APPLAUD REPORT ON OBESITY PREVENTION RELEASED
BY THE INSTITUTE OF MEDICINE**

*UH President M.R.C. Greenwood Helps Lead National Effort
Against Obesity*

HONOLULU – America's obesity epidemic is so severe and widespread, U.S. hospitals are ripping out wall-mounted toilets and replacing them with floor models to better support obese patients. Cars today burn nearly one billion gallons of gasoline more a year than they did in 1960 when the people who rode in them weighed less.

These two alarming facts give urgency to a new report released today by the Institute of Medicine (IOM) advising the nation to accelerate efforts to reduce obesity. The Hawai'i State Department of Health (DOH) and the University of Hawai'i recognize the report as a major milestone in the battle against obesity, and applaud this national effort to improve the health of our people. The report was released today at a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) conference in Washington D.C. "**Accelerating Progress in Obesity Prevention: Solving the Weight of the Nation**" is available at <http://www.nap.edu>.

University of Hawai'i President **MRC Greenwood** served as vice chair of the study and was a prime resource for the IOM report. A nationally recognized expert and author on obesity and diabetes, Greenwood said, "While Hawai'i has had some of the best health statistics in the nation, in the last 15 years we have seen our rate of obesity increase from 11 percent in 1995 to 23 percent in 2010. Across-the-board societal changes need to take place and the new IOM report outlines effective strategies for making these changes happen."

Health Director **Loretta Fuddy** is attending the CDC's "Weight of the Nation" conference in

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Washington D.C. today and said, “In Hawai‘i, one in three of our children entering kindergarten are already overweight or obese. The IOM report serves as a culmination of expertise on obesity prevention from around the nation, and will be an invaluable resource for our Childhood Obesity Prevention Task Force as we assemble members and determine ways to reverse troubling obesity trends in Hawai‘i.”

The IOM report notes specific strategies to weave healthy foods and beverages and physical activity into our daily lives. They include: requiring at least 60 minutes of physical education and activity in school per day; adopting industry-wide guidelines on which foods and beverages can be marketed to children and how; expansion of workplace wellness programs; increasing the availability of lower-calorie, healthier children’s meals in restaurants; and implementing flexible financing or tax credits to encourage developers to build sidewalks near new housing projects and locate supermarkets in those communities.

Hawai‘i Senate Bill 2778 established a Childhood Obesity Prevention Task Force this year to develop and recommend legislation for the prevention of childhood obesity in our state. The DOH director will serve as the chairperson and members of the task force will include state directors, legislators, representatives from the University of Hawai‘i, American Heart Association, American Cancer Association, American Diabetes Association, and others. The task force will report its findings and recommendations, including proposed legislation, to the legislature in December 2012.

The DOH has been engaged in a number of projects with community organizations, healthcare agencies, and businesses to collaborate on addressing the issue of obesity in our state. Last week, in conjunction with the release of the IOM report and in partnership with HBO, Kaiser Permanente, and the University of Hawai‘i, the DOH conducted a special screening and panel presentation of the HBO series, “Weight of the Nation.” The series will air to the public on May 14 and 15. The department will hold a symposium in June to review the scientific literature and recommendations of the IOM report. The DOH is also continuing its *Take the Leap* television and radio campaign to inform the public about the dangers of obesity and encourage people to make healthier choices concerning physical activity and nutrition. For more information on DOH initiatives for obesity prevention in Hawai‘i go to: www.healthyhawaii.com

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