

## Public Hearing Chronic Disease Prevention Hearing

### **Southeastern Illinois Community Health Coalition (SICHC) Prepared Statement Mt. Vernon, IL, November 30, 2010**

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The Southeastern Illinois Community Health Coalition represents more than 20 organizations and 50 members from Saline, White and Gallatin Counties; and has a mission to “take an interest in, and a commitment to, improving the health of the communities of Southeastern Illinois”.

Wikipedia defines a chronic disease as one that is long lasting or recurrent. A chronic disease is one lasting 3 months or more, by the definition of the U.S. National Center for Health Statistics. They generally cannot be prevented by vaccines or cured by medication, nor do they just disappear. Eighty-eight percent of Americans over 65 years of age have at least one chronic health condition (as of 1998). Health damaging behaviors - particularly tobacco use, lack of physical activity, and poor eating habits - are major contributors to the leading chronic diseases.

Our Health Coalition is currently working on updating our IPLAN, or Illinois Project for the Local Assessment of Needs, for 2011 while prioritizing action plans to address the risk factors associated with current health priorities that include substance abuse, heart disease and cancer. And while substance abuse may not be considered a chronic disease it is certainly a leading contributor to chronic diseases of the heart and liver. So, in essence, all of the health priorities identified in 2006 (and most certainly will be in 2011) are either chronic diseases or contributing factors for them.

The recently released County Health Rankings painted a very dire portrait of the overall health of Southern Illinoisans. Further research into the statistical data surrounding these rankings paints a picture of deteriorating health conditions with a steady increase in cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, high cholesterol rates, high diabetes rates as well as poor eating habits and not enough physical activity. According to the most recent Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (BRFSS), the coronary heart disease mortality rate in Southern Illinois is 38% higher than the state average.

One of the strategies already being used within the coalition is the Coordinated Approach to Child Health (CATCH) program that combines nutritional education with physical activity and has already been implemented in seven (7) school districts in Southeastern Illinois. Health fairs, wellness workshops, summer food programs, WIC nutrition education are just some of the ways prevention is currently being addressed.

It is imperative the State of Illinois, in collaboration with local communities, invest in the future health of its citizens. At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century infectious diseases were prevalent in the United States. Public Health became a priority and brought sewage treatment, potable water guidelines and food safety programs. In short, the creation (and funding) of public health programs made our citizens the safest in the world. As we now enter the 2<sup>nd</sup> decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the fight is with Chronic Diseases that are affecting citizens at an alarming rate. Nearly one in two Americans (133 million) has a chronic medical condition of one kind or another, and chronic illnesses cause about 70% of deaths in the United States and take up about 75% of the costs each year.

What other incentive could the state of Illinois have than to save lives and money. It's imperative the State must address Chronic Diseases through policy changes designed to promote the importance of proper nutrition, an appropriate level of physical activity and prevention programs for alcohol, tobacco and drugs. It's should be of the highest priority that the dedication of a steady funding stream and a change in attitudes that we can make a difference.