



Testimony by:
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Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Jason Harder and I am speaking to you on behalf of the volunteers and staff of the American Heart Association in support of House Bills 6151 and 6152.

The goal of the American Heart Association is to, by the year 2020, improve the cardiovascular health of Americans by 20% while reducing deaths from cardiovascular diseases and stroke by 20%. Educating our residents on healthy choices and creating environments that support these choices will help us meet our goals. Complete Streets help provide environments that encourage physical activity and have the potential to affect every single person in a community; from the baby being pushed in a stroller on the sidewalk, to students riding their bikes to school in a designated bike lane, to a senior citizen using a safe road crossing on their morning walk.

When designing Michigan's communities for the future, it is increasingly important to keep in mind that our nation is in the midst of an obesity epidemic right now. The percentage of children aged 6 to 11 who are considered overweight has steadily risen from just 4% in the early 1970s, to 17% in 2006. Children who are overweight are at increased risk for cardiovascular disease, hypertension and diabetes. According to the Department of Health and Human Services, overweight adolescents have a 70% chance of becoming overweight adults. This increases to 80% if one or both parents are overweight or obese.

Physical activity is one way that we can break the trend of obesity and the prevalence of cardiovascular disease. The positive outcomes of regular exercise are numerous. Aerobic exercise, jogging, walking or bike riding for just 30 minutes a day can help lower your blood pressure and reduce your risk for heart disease and stroke. Children see the same health benefits, with the added bonus of improved scholastic achievement. Encouraging children to incorporate daily physical activity is something we need to do to turn the tide on childhood obesity. In Michigan, the cost of treating adults with health problems which stem from obesity is over \$2.9 billion dollars a year.

In my position with the American Heart Association, I am able to speak with volunteers and advocates from all over the state. Whenever I talk about Complete Streets and the importance of this legislation, nearly everyone says the same thing if they live in a neighborhood where it is safe to walk and bike: they tell me how much they exercise and enjoy where they live. Complete Streets will help ensure that communities continue to improve their infrastructure so that all Michigan residents are easily able to incorporate daily exercise into their lives.

Thank you very much for allowing me to speak today. I encourage your support of HB 6151 and 6152.