

(H. B. 2650)

(No. 162)

(Approved August 16, 2006)

AN ACT

To declare the week of September 3 through 10 of each year as the “Healthy Beginning Week” in order to raise awareness on the importance of nutrition for newborns and of the problems of obesity in children.

STATEMENT OF MOTIVES

Studies conducted in the United States reveal that 13% of teen-agers are obese and Puerto Rico should not be too far from that reality. Obesity has become a world pandemic. Last year, the first epidemiological study on food consumption patterns, attitudes, overweight, and obesity in babies from 4 to 24 months old was conducted in Puerto Rico.

This study was commissioned by Gerber and performed by a group of researchers from the Ponce School of Medicine. It had as sample 164 children from the southern and metropolitan area of the Island, and its purpose was to estimate the food patterns and the prevalence of obesity in infants from four to twenty-four months of age. The most important results of this study were the following:

- The prevalence of obesity is of 32%.
- 5% is at risk for obesity
- The introduction of solid food is done before the recommended time.
- Not recommended food is introduced in the diet
- 63% of the infants were breastfed

- Other foods are incorporated to the formula (ex.: honey, cereal...)
- 23% consumed three or more portions of fruit per day (24 hour register)
- 6% consumed two or more portions of vegetables per day (24 hour register).

The results of this study reveal the profile of minors with greater propensity to suffer conditions that shall affect their full development rather than a nutrition problem. These conditions shall, in turn, have a great economic impact in the families that must treat the same. Malnutrition also affects the concentration capacity of children and the development of their motor system, which will eventually be reflected in their achievements in school.

Gerber Products Company of Puerto Rico, Inc. has developed the *Healthy Beginning* campaign. The goal of the Company is to raise awareness on the prevention of obesity and future diseases in children in parents and the general community. The coming month of September marks the fourth year of its establishment. The *Healthy Beginning* campaign was launched in Puerto Rico in 2003 and since then, the program has offered guidelines for the development of good nutritional habits at an early age and thus prevent obesity and chronic diseases in adults, to more than 350,000 persons.

Through this resolution we propose to promote raising awareness in the Puerto Rican families on the importance of preventing obesity and future diseases in children.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF PUERTO RICO:

Section 1.- The week from September 3 through 10 of each year is hereby declared the “Healthy Beginning Week.”

Section 2.- During said week, the Department of State shall issue a proclamation to such effect and the Department of Health in coordination with volunteer organizations shall conduct various activities to raise awareness on the importance of good nutrition and the prevention of obesity in children.

Section 3.- This Act shall take effect immediately after its approval.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify to the Secretary of State that the following Act No. 162 (H.B. 2650) of the 3rd Session of the 15th Legislature of Puerto Rico:

AN ACT to declare the week of September 3 through 10 of each year as the “Healthy Beginning Week” in order to raise awareness on the importance of nutrition for newborns and of the problems of obesity in children,

has been translated from Spanish to English and that the English version is correct.

In San Juan, Puerto Rico, today 13th of March of 2007.

Francisco J. Domenech
Director