

Whereas, the annual costs of cardiovascular disease to the health care system in the United States in 1996 were estimated to have been \$151 billion, a 9% increase from the previous year; and

Whereas, increased physical activity in both children and adults has been proven to reduce the incidence of the risk factors for cardiovascular disease; and

Whereas, experts in this area agree that, for children, school physical education class is the opportune setting for teaching lifetime physical activity skills and instilling positive attitudes toward physical fitness; and

Whereas, for adults, workplace fitness programs and local community based physical activity programs are the most successful mechanisms for improving fitness levels; Now, therefore,

1 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

2 Section 1. (a) The purposes of this act are to:

3 (1) Improve the fitness of North Carolina's youth through the establishment
4 of an interschool physical education mentoring program;

5 (2) Provide a community-based approach to addressing the physical fitness
6 needs of all North Carolinians through the encouragement of
7 development of local fitness councils in each of the State's 100 counties;

8 (3) Utilize, in a coordinated fashion, the educational and training resources
9 and services that have been developed by the Governor's Council on
10 Physical Fitness and Health and other appropriate organizations;

11 (4) Raise awareness of the general public about the importance of physical
12 activity in preventing stroke and heart disease;

13 (5) Adequately fund these programs; and

14 (6) Provide lasting improvement in the fitness and physical well-being of
15 North Carolinians, thus providing the State's citizens with an improved
16 quality of life and society with the reduction of health care costs.

17 (b) There is established the 1997-98 Youth Fitness Mentoring Program in the
18 Department of Environment, Health, and Natural Resources, Governor's Council on
19 Physical Fitness and Health. Under this program the Governor's Council on Physical
20 Fitness and Health shall provide grants to enable 12 "model" schools that are former
21 recipients of the Governor's Award for Youth Fitness to partner with 12 "aspiring"
22 schools that are trying to meet the requirements for the Governor's Award so that
23 physical educators may share ideas and expertise. Under this program, the Council shall
24 do the following:

25 (1) Identify and partner the most appropriate local schools to carry out the
26 program;

27 (2) Provide training and support to public school personnel to ensure the
28 successful implementation of the program;

29 (3) Provide opportunities for physical educators at aspiring schools to
30 borrow curricula and innovative teaching techniques from physical
31 educators at model schools and encourage the implementation of
32 improvements;

1 (4) Improve exercise and lifestyle activity habits of children at aspiring and
2 model schools within one school year;

3 (5) Improve the fitness of children at aspiring and model schools; and

4 (6) Conduct a qualitative and quantitative assessment of the impact of the
5 mentoring program on students and physical educators at aspiring and
6 model schools.

7 (c) There is established the Local Fitness Council Development Program in the
8 Department of Environment, Health, and Natural Resources, Governor's Council on
9 Physical Fitness and Health. The purpose of the program shall be to encourage the
10 development of local fitness councils in each county in North Carolina where one does
11 not currently exist. Under this program, the Council shall do the following:

12 (1) Work with and provide technical assistance to community leaders,
13 including but not limited to, county commissioners, in each North
14 Carolina county to encourage the development of local fitness councils
15 and the development of community-based strategies to build and
16 maintain the highest quality of physical fitness and health services;

17 (2) Develop intervention strategies to address the physical fitness needs of
18 each county's residents;

19 (3) Develop community-level indicators to annually measure health status;

20 (4) Allocate grant funds to offset start-up costs of local fitness councils;

21 (5) Encourage community-based health programs;

22 (6) Promote good health and disease prevention in schools and workplaces;

23 (7) Establish a local fitness council in all 100 North Carolina counties by
24 June 30, 1999; and

25 (8) Establish community-level indicators and objectives for improving the
26 fitness of North Carolinians in each county by June 30, 1998.

27 (d) In implementing the programs established under subsections (b) and (c) of
28 this section, the Department shall ensure that sufficient staff are available and trained to
29 effectively implement each program.

30 Section 2. (a) There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department
31 of Environment, Health, and Natural Resources the sum of one hundred thousand dollars
32 (\$100,000) for the 1997-98 fiscal year and the sum of one hundred thousand dollars
33 (\$100,000) for the 1998-99 fiscal year for the Youth Fitness Mentoring Program
34 established under Section 1 of this act.

35 (b) There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of
36 Environment, Health, and Natural Resources the sum of three hundred thousand dollars
37 (\$300,000) for the 1997-98 fiscal year and the sum of three hundred thousand dollars
38 (\$300,000) for the 1998-99 fiscal year for the Local Fitness Council Development
39 Program established under Section 1 of this act.

40 Section 3. This act becomes effective July 1, 1997.