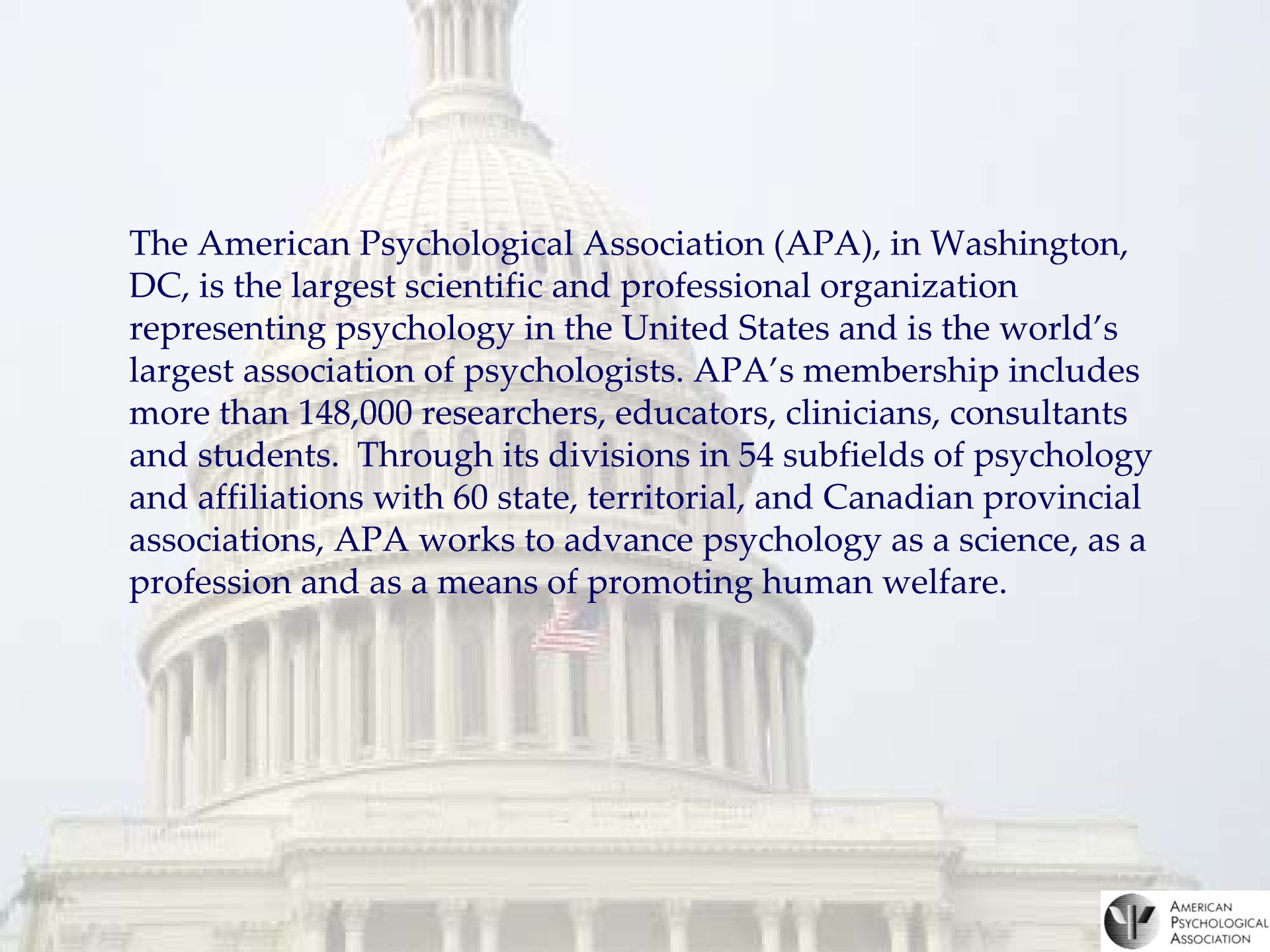




# Federal Obesity Policy: Finding Opportunities to Promote Health At Every Size

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Society for Nutrition Education Webinar  
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The American Psychological Association (APA), in Washington, DC, is the largest scientific and professional organization representing psychology in the United States and is the world's largest association of psychologists. APA's membership includes more than 148,000 researchers, educators, clinicians, consultants and students. Through its divisions in 54 subfields of psychology and affiliations with 60 state, territorial, and Canadian provincial associations, APA works to advance psychology as a science, as a profession and as a means of promoting human welfare.

# APA Structure

## 4 Directorates:

- Education
- Practice
- **Public Interest**
- Science

## 4 Government Relations Offices


# Public Interest Government Relations Office (PI-GRO)

PI-GRO actively engages in shaping federal policy to promote psychology in the public interest.

Public Interest issue areas include:

- Children, youth, and families
- Disabilities
- **Eating disorders/obesity prevention**
- Ethnic minorities
- HIV/AIDS
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons
- Media and telecommunications
- Older adults
- Service member/veterans health
- Socioeconomic status
- Trauma, violence, and abuse
- Women





Advocacy positions in these areas are based on policy resolutions of the APA Council of Representatives and consultation with the Board for the Advancement of Psychology in the Public Interest (BAPPI) and its committees, APA divisions, and other interested members.



# Eating Disorders/ Obesity Prevention



# With input from APA members, PI-GRO:

- Supports legislative strategies that encourage positive body image, healthy eating habits, appropriate levels of physical activity, and improved self-esteem across the weight spectrum.
- Provides recommendations to federal agencies and other organizations encouraging a shift from focusing solely on weight to emphasizing health.
- Collaborates with APA Committees, such as the Committee on Children, Youth & Families, on initiatives related to the prevention of obesity and disordered eating.

# Specifically, PI-GRO is developing policy strategies to address:

- Poor Nutrition and Physical Inactivity
- Body Dissatisfaction
- Weight-related Teasing and Weight Stigmatization
- Targeted Marketing to Children
- Home Environment (e.g., family mealtimes, parental messaging)
- Cultural and Socioeconomic Factors

# Recommendations to Prevent Obesity and Disordered Eating in Children and Youth

PI-GRO's specific recommendations for federal policies to prevent obesity and disordered eating in children and youth include the following:

- Education, advocacy, and research efforts to integrate the prevention of obesity, disordered eating and eating disorders.
- Prevention and intervention efforts that accurately reflect the central role of culture and ensure that the specific needs of different ethnic and socioeconomic groups are addressed.
- Projects and programs that educate families on the importance of family meals at home, encourage families to regularly eat meals together at home, and support innovative strategies to help families across all socioeconomic levels successfully implement family mealtimes.



# Recommendations to Prevent Obesity and Disordered Eating in Children and Youth *(continued)*

- Initiatives to inform parents that encouraging dieting in youth may lead to long-term increased weight and disordered eating and that a helpful alternative is to direct efforts toward modeling and providing a home environment that supports healthful eating, physical activity, and well-being.
- Research on behavioral interventions that effectively help youth and families maintain healthy nutrition, appropriate levels of physical activity, and body satisfaction.
- Initiatives to improve the availability of and access to affordable, healthy foods across socioeconomic levels.
- Initiatives to make neighborhoods safe so that families and children have increased opportunities for outdoor activities.

# Recommendations to Prevent Obesity and Disordered Eating in Children and Youth *(continued)*

- Efforts to increase the availability of healthy food options, including fresh fruits and vegetables and sources of calcium, in day care settings, preschools and schools.
- Strategies to increase opportunities for physical activity in schools through ensuring that schools are required to offer the recommended daily levels of physical activity to students.
- Efforts to increase body satisfaction among youth across the weight spectrum.
- Bullying prevention and intervention programs that specifically address weight-related teasing.
- Efforts to reduce targeted advertising and marketing that promotes unhealthy foods and beverages to children.
- Efforts to end marketing and advertising that objectifies and sexualizes girls and women.

A low-angle, slightly faded photograph of the United States Capitol building's dome. The dome is the central focus, showing its intricate architectural details, including the circular base with columns and the upper dome with its lantern. An American flag is visible on a balcony level. The sky is a pale, overcast blue.

Questions?



The background of the slide is a faded, light-colored image of the United States Capitol building, showing the iconic dome and the surrounding classical architecture. The text is overlaid on this background.

# Federal Legislation

- Authorizing Bills
- Appropriating Bills



# Bullying and Gang Reduction for Improved Education Act (H.R. 3438)

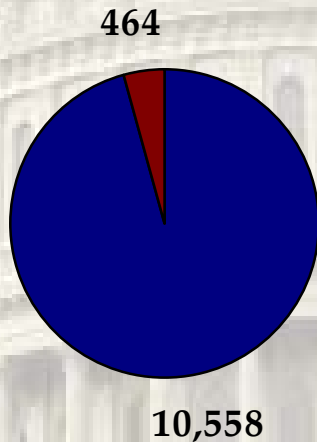
- Provides for bullying and gang (as well as drug and violence) prevention and accountability-based programs designed to enhance school safety

## Findings:

*(8) Weight-based teasing is consistently associated with low body satisfaction, low self-esteem, depressive symptoms, and thinking about or attempting suicide.*

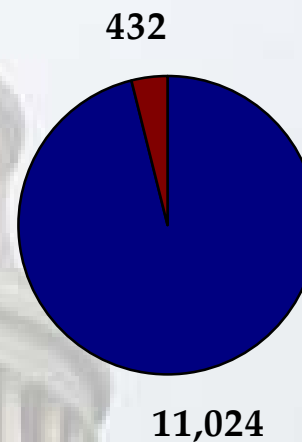
# Fewer than 5% of all introduced legislation becomes Public Law

109<sup>th</sup> Congress



■ Bills ■ Laws

110<sup>th</sup> Congress



■ Bills ■ Laws

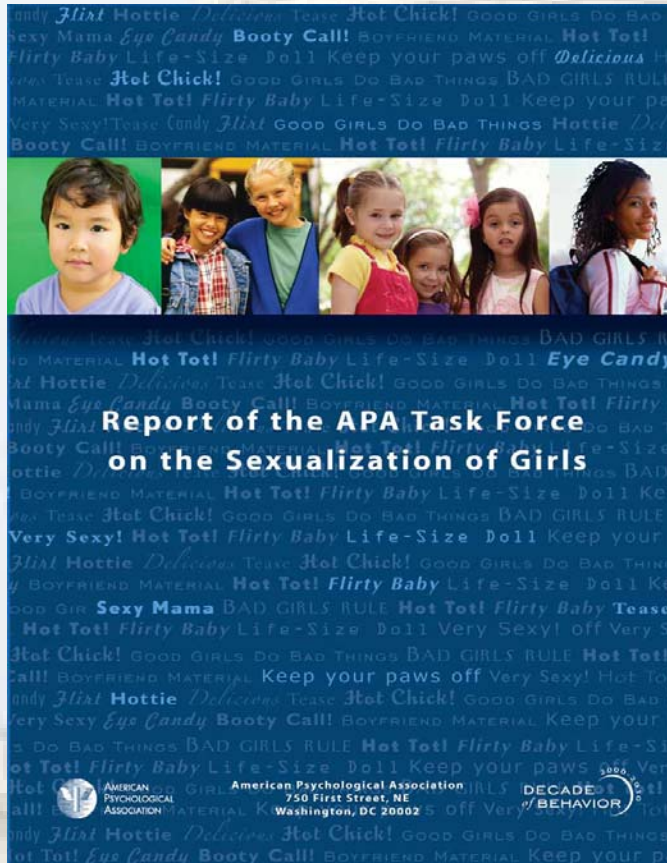
# APA Suggested Report Language Department of Education Appropriations

- *Bullying Prevention*

The Committee is concerned about the prevalence of bullying, which directly involves about one-third of American school children in a school semester.... The adoption of research on and prevention strategies for weight-related teasing and its effect on the development of low self-esteem is strongly encouraged.

# Elementary and Secondary Education Act Reauthorization

## Research on the Sexualization of Girls



- APA respectfully requests the inclusion of a study regarding how exposure to sexualized representations of girls affects girls' health, cognitive performance, and academic achievement, as well as the promise of media literacy programs to moderate these effects.

# U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, & Pensions (HELP)

- Subcommittee on Children & Families Hearings
  - *Childhood Obesity: The Declining Health of America's Next Generation* (Part I –July 16; Part II - July 23)
- APA written testimony:
  - “It is of paramount importance to promote healthy lifestyle changes without inadvertently perpetuating weight stigmatization or promoting disordered eating. Therefore, APA recommends that emphasis be placed on behavior and health outcomes for children and families across the weight spectrum. Specifically, we support legislative initiatives aimed at improving nutrition and physical activity; increasing body satisfaction; decreasing weight stigmatization and weight-related teasing; promoting responsible marketing to children; and supporting healthy home environments.”

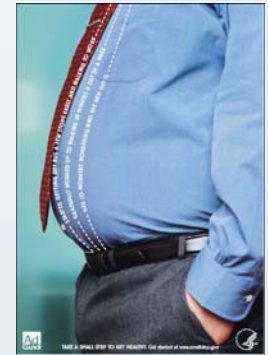
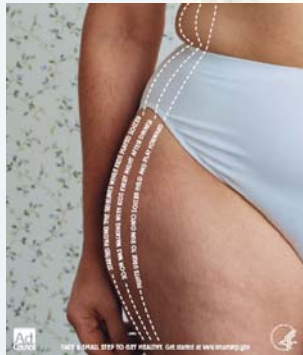


Shifting the focus  
to HEALTH

Relationships with  
Federal Agencies



# Small Steps Obesity Prevention Campaign (HHS)



# PI-GRO Response

“We are... concerned that some of the [campaign’s] accompanying advertisements include language and images that may have unintended negative consequences. In particular, the use of derogatory terms... and focus on individual body parts may promote body dissatisfaction and self-objectification in viewers.

Studies suggest that objectification may undermine confidence in and comfort with one’s own body and lead to negative consequences including shame, anxiety, and self-disgust.... Further research indicates that body dissatisfaction may actually lead to disordered eating, including binge eating behavior. In contrast, strategies that promote body satisfaction may be more effective in preventing both obesity and disordered eating than those that increase body dissatisfaction...”

# Comments to Federal Agencies

- APA supports efforts to optimize health through encouraging improved nutrition and physical activity and recommends that these efforts be focused across the weight spectrum.
- APA believes it is necessary to promote healthy lifestyle changes without inadvertently perpetuating weight stigmatization or promoting disordered eating and eating disorders.
- APA supports the further development of initiatives that encourage positive body image, healthy eating habits, appropriate levels of physical activity, and improved self-esteem, focusing on behavior and health outcomes.
- APA encourages clarification that obesity is correlated to, rather than the cause of, health complications including diabetes and cardiovascular disease.
- APA strongly recommends that screening for unhealthy weight control behaviors be encouraged as a regular practice for individuals of all weights to increase early identification and intervention for disordered eating and eating disorders.


# Comments to Federal Agencies (continued)

- Because individuals across the weight spectrum can be healthy and benefit from healthy nutrition and physical activity, APA encourages refrain from broadly defining healthy weight.
- APA encourages research into behavioral interventions that effectively help individuals maintain healthy nutrition and appropriate levels of physical activity.
- APA underscores the importance of healthy eating and appropriate levels of physical activity in children and family members across the weight spectrum.
- APA supports efforts to address the lack of access to affordable, high-quality healthy foods and safe opportunities to be physically active in low-income neighborhoods.
- APA encourages attention to the importance of family mealtime.
- APA underscores the importance of weight stigmatization and weight-based teasing in relation to school-aged children.



Questions?



The background of the slide is a photograph of the United States Capitol building dome, viewed from a low angle looking up. The dome is white and features a prominent American flag on a tall pole in the center of the lower levels. The sky is a pale, overcast blue.

# Inside APA: Walking the Walk



# APA Staff Initiatives

## Health At Every Size Brown Bag Lunch (NEDAW)



# Staff Health and Wellness Committee

## *Mission:*

- The mission of the Health and Wellness Committee is to improve health among APA employees and promote a healthful work environment through programs that support vitality, balance, self-acceptance, and size diversity. The Committee considers and recommends initiatives that highlight the direct connection between psychology and wellness to help employees make healthy lifestyle choices, increase health knowledge, and promote resilience.



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[www.apa.org/ppo/pi/eating\\_disorders.html](http://www.apa.org/ppo/pi/eating_disorders.html)

