

First lady sees economic benefit in curbing childhood obesity

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WASHINGTON — First lady Michelle Obama emphasized the economic benefits in reducing childhood obesity at the National Le

“Every city and every town faces it. If ignored it’s an issue that can drastically alter the economic landscape for generations to come,” said Obama.

The nationwide initiative Let’s Move, launched last February, is dedicated to solving the problem of childhood obesity within a generation. Obama called on city officials to sign up for the Let’s Move Cities and Towns campaign. More than 550 towns and cities have already signed up.

Today, nearly one in three American children is obese or overweight. Healthcare costs of obesity-related diseases are 147 billion dollars per year.

“We must acknowledge that there is a problem and then we have to do everything in our power to work together to fix it,” said Obama.

Obama acknowledged that while budget cuts are a priority in cities across America, childhood obesity has significant economic impacts, such as lower productivity in the workforce.

“Childhood obesity is affecting your workforce. Studies show that

obese children are less healthy and miss far more days of school on average,” said Obama. “So for the parents of those kids, that can mean more tardiness, more early departures from work and higher absenteeism to stay home and care for these kids.”

Obama further explains that childhood obesity doesn't just affect current businesses, but it makes cities with high obesity rates unattractive to future employers.

According to a study by Trust for American's Health, “Businesses are reluctant to locate in areas where the population, particularly the future workforce, is unhealthy.”

Obama also said that military leaders have been strong supporters of the campaign considering that 27 percent of 18-24-year-olds are too overweight to serve in the military.