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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Landmark Menu Labeling Legislation Lands on Governor's Desk

State Leads Nation in Requiring Calorie Info on Menu Boards

SACRAMENTO, CA, AUGUST 31, 2008... Following final California Senate passage this morning, California is now a signature away from becoming the first state in the nation to require chain restaurants to post calorie counts on menus and menu boards. SB 1420 (Padilla), which affects chains with 20 or more locations, now moves to Governor Schwarzenegger's desk for signature.

"This is a huge victory for the health of Californians and the consumer's right to know," said Dr. Harold Goldstein of the California Center for Public Health Advocacy, a leading proponent and sponsor of the legislation. "This significantly increases our arsenal in the growing battle against obesity. When Californians walk into a fast-food restaurant, the vital information they need to make healthier decisions will be right in front of them."

If signed by the Governor, more than 17,000 restaurants in California will be affected by the legislation. The bill provides for a two-year phase-in period – with brochures containing nutritional information (the number of calories, grams of saturated fat, grams of carbohydrates and milligrams of sodium) required at the point of sale and drive-throughs beginning July 1, 2009, and posting of calorie information on menus and indoor menu boards beginning January 1, 2011.

Senator Alex Padilla (D-Los Angeles) authored the bill with Senator Carole Migden (D-San Francisco) and Assemblyman Marc DeSaulnier (D-Concord). The bill is sponsored by the California Center for Public Health Advocacy and the American Cancer Society.

“With this legislation, Californians will now be able to easily see that a large order of fries and a cheeseburger at McDonald's has fewer calories than a blueberry muffin and a venti mocha Frappuccino at Starbucks,” said Goldstein. “Prominently giving such information to consumers -- before they place an order -- isn't going to end California's obesity epidemic, but it's a good place to start.”

The challenge to understand chain restaurant menus was highlighted last year, when a statewide Field Research Corporation poll was released showing that only 10 percent of Californians could pick the healthiest item from a short list of common fast foods. That same poll indicated that 84 percent of Californians support the concept of posting nutritional information in chain restaurants. Restaurants and fast-food outlets are a key concern because Americans consume about one-third of their calories at these establishments.

CCPHA is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization leading efforts in California to understand and address the state's growing obesity crisis. For more information on this legislation, visit the CCPHA site at: www.publichealthadvocacy.org.