

WHEREAS, In 2000, approximately 26% of Americans and 24% of Marylanders engaged in no leisure time physical activity; and

WHEREAS, In 1998, the obesity rate in Maryland was greater than 15%; and

WHEREAS, In the United States, the number of adults and children who are overweight has risen sharply over the past 25 years, and the percentage of adults and children who make trips on foot dropped during that same time period; and

WHEREAS, Health care costs related to cardiovascular disease in Maryland are \$2.25 billion yearly, and the nationwide costs attributed to obesity are \$99 billion, \$52 billion in direct health costs and \$47 billion in indirect costs annually; and

WHEREAS, If all inactive Americans were to participate in physical activity, an estimated \$76.6 billion in direct health costs would be saved; and

WHEREAS, More than 10% of children are overweight, and encouraging children to walk more can establish more physically active and healthy lifestyles; and

WHEREAS, Suicide is one of the top 10 leading causes of death, and physical activity reduces feelings of depression and anxiety; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. Surgeon General recommends that all Americans walk at least 30 minutes per day, 5 days a week; and

WHEREAS, Walking is one of the best forms of exercise because it helps reduce cholesterol, improve cardiovascular fitness, improve blood pressure, reduce the risk of heart attack, and prevent colon cancer, osteoporosis, and Type 2 diabetes; and

WHEREAS, 348,000 Maryland residents have Type 2 diabetes, and walking 30 minutes a day cuts the risk of developing Type 2 diabetes by 58%; and

WHEREAS, Walking is ideally suited for rehabilitation after illness, surgery, or injury by strengthening the heart, lungs, and circulatory system; and

WHEREAS, The risk of injury while walking is less than with other forms of physical activity, and injuries while walking are less severe than with many other exercises; and

WHEREAS, Walking is a fun activity that friends and family can do together; and

WHEREAS, Walking promotes informal interactions between people and strengthens community, and many neighborhoods lack any social contact between neighbors; and

WHEREAS, Walking is a natural activity that does not require any specialized equipment or training and is an inexpensive physical activity that most Maryland citizens can do easily, at any time during the day; and

WHEREAS, Walking is as close to a universal physical activity as there is and can be easily integrated into the daily routine of most Marylanders; and