Background on Statewide Obesity Coordination:
Obesity task forces, committees and commissions currently exist on federal, state and local levels. Between 2001 and 2010, at least 21 states enacted a statewide childhood obesity task force through legislation.1

Obesity task forces are charged with developing, implementing, monitoring, evaluating and soliciting funds for a statewide obesity prevention plan. Many leverage existing resources and explore new strategies to increase fruit and vegetable consumption, physical activity and breastfeeding and decrease screen time and consumption of unhealthy foods.

If Louisiana reduces its average Body Mass Index (BMI) by 5% by 2030, the state can save $9.8 billion in health care costs.2

Why Louisiana Needs a Coordinated Approach to Obesity:
• Louisiana was the most obese state in 2013 with 35% of adults reporting a BMI of 30 or above.3 40% of Louisiana youth (ages 10-17) are overweight or obese.4
• Louisiana spends at least $2.3 billion on obesity-related medical expenditures each year.5
• Obese employees are more likely to miss work due to illness, injury or disability than employees at a healthy weight.6
• Louisiana has a growing volume of obesity-focused public health programs and policies across the state in both private and public sectors. A guiding entity will help to identify and promote best practices.

Louisiana’s Overall Health Rank, based on America’s Health Rankings: 48th

Other Obesity Indicators3:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health Indicator</th>
<th>Louisiana’s Rank</th>
<th>Prevalence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obesity</td>
<td>50th</td>
<td>35% of adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diabetes</td>
<td>48th</td>
<td>12% of adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardiovascular Deaths</td>
<td>46th</td>
<td>319 deaths per 100,000 pop.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Example of a State-Level Law:
Texas SB 556 (2007) created an Interagency Obesity Task Force that consists of the Commissioners of State Health Services, Agriculture and Education. This task force is required to align efforts to decrease obesity and submit reports to the state legislature.

Projected Costs:
• A commission or committee will need to solicit funds to implement its statewide obesity prevention plan.
• Funds may be necessary for a part-time lead at an estimated $15,000-$20,000 per year. One of more support staff may be required in the future to monitor and evaluate the obesity prevention plan.

Next Steps for Louisiana:
Louisiana is encouraged to establish a statewide coordinated group(s) to monitor, evaluate and enforce obesity reduction and prevention policies and programs. Membership could include representatives from government agencies and community organizations.
The Impact

**Strengths**

- Obesity state task forces, committees and commissions enable the state to modify and reduce redundancies in policies and programs. They also contribute to the development of a statewide, evidence-based obesity plan and state-level policies to promote healthy lifestyles.

- Coordinated obesity prevention efforts can lead to decreases in health care expenditures.²

- Reducing Louisiana’s rate of obesity will improve productivity, save individuals and employers money on medical costs and reduce the prevalence of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, hypertension and other obesity-related diseases.²,⁶

**Barriers**

- Financial support is required to maximize the sustainability and success of the task force and its programming.

Additional research briefs on Louisiana Public Health Strategies can be found at prc.tulane.edu/publications

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References
3. United Health Foundation (2013). America’s Health Rankings: A Call to Action for Individuals and Their Communities.