



Risa Lavizzo-Mourey,
M.D., M.B.A.

RWJF TO EVALUATE EFFORTS BY INDUSTRY

National Press Club
Washington, D.C.

We're here in recognition of the most urgent public health threat facing our nation: the childhood obesity epidemic. In the United States, more than 23 million young people are either obese or overweight—that's nearly one in three children and teens, more than triple the rate just a few decades ago.

If current trends continue, today's young people may be the first generation in American history to live sicker and die younger than their parents' generation. That's simply unacceptable. And it's why the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has committed \$500 million toward reversing the childhood obesity epidemic by 2015.

To be successful, we must do more than raise awareness. We must change the food environments where children live, learn and play—especially in communities that have the fewest resources and face the highest risk for obesity and related illnesses. Why? Because healthy food environments drive healthy food choices.

I'm here today because I believe the Healthy Weight Commitment has the potential to help reverse the childhood obesity epidemic. Everyone has a role to play in bringing healthy choices to our communities: parents, education leaders, governments at all levels, philanthropies like ours, food and beverage companies, and those who sell their products.

But the food and beverage manufacturers and retailers who are part of this effort are uniquely positioned to help restore energy balance in children's lives by reducing the excess calories they consume. These companies have the expertise and ability to reformulate their products and change their marketing strategies in ways that help Americans return to energy balance. They can create healthier options and make them appealing to children and affordable for families.

I have personally discussed the Healthy Weight Commitment (HWC) at length with its leaders. I am convinced their commitment to this cause is sincere and has the potential to make a difference. What remains unknown is whether efforts by member companies will be strong enough to have a meaningful impact on the calories children consume.

That's why the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has agreed to serve as independent evaluator for the HWC marketplace program. We will support an independent group of scientists who will define the measures that will be used to track progress and determine whether the program is making a significant difference for our nation's children. We'll share what we learn publicly, and we'll be forthright and direct in recommending improvements. That's our commitment here.

It is now my pleasure to introduce Indra Nooyi, chairman and chief executive officer of PepsiCo and vice chair of the Healthy Weight Commitment Foundation. She will speak primarily about the HWC workplace pillar. But before turning over the podium, I want to acknowledge Indra for being one of the driving forces behind this initiative. I consider her a visionary leader in the effort to reverse the childhood obesity epidemic.

Review Risa Lavizzo-Mourey's presentations, commentaries, interviews and media briefings at the President's Corner of the RWJF Web site at www.rwjf.org.