Senator Barbara A. Mikulski (D-Md.), a senior member of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, today applauded the introduction of the Federal Obesity Prevention Act of 2008. The legislation, which she co-sponsored, was introduced at today's HELP Subcommittee on Children and Families hearing on finding solutions to the childhood obesity epidemic, and creates a task force to coordinate federal agencies' work on the obesity epidemic.

"Today's children are overfed and undernourished. As a social worker, I know we need to meet the basic needs of children. They need healthy food and a safe space to play," said Senator Mikulski. "They should not need heart bypass surgery or Lipitor to lower their high cholesterol levels."

Obesity rates for children between the ages of six and 19 have tripled in the last 25 years. Currently, only 2 percent of American children eat a healthy diet, and one in four Americans eat fast food every day. Elementary school children are now suffering from high blood pressure, type II diabetes, high cholesterol, gallstones and painful joint conditions at alarming rates - conditions that once only affected adults.

In Maryland, 13 percent of children between the ages of two and five are considered overweight. The State has the 29th highest obesity rate in the country. In addition to today's bill, Senator Mikulski has fought for legislation to combat the obesity epidemic, including cosponsoring the Child Nutrition Promotion and School Lunch Protection Act (S.771), which bans many junk foods sold in school vending machines, and the Head Start for School Readiness Act (S. 556), which provides nutritious meals to low-income preschool children.