

Dear Senator/Representative,

I am writing to ask you to make physical education a priority in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) reauthorization. We need physical education to be designated as a core subject and we need to preserve the current federal Carol M. White Physical Education Program (PEP) and its funding. These key physical education provisions are included in the Senate ESEA bill, S. 1177, the Every Child Achieves Act. Physical education is critical to the health and academic success of our children now and in the future.

The overwhelming majority of children spend much of their time at school, and schools offer a unique platform to help students become more healthy and active. Forty-eight percent of all high schools have NO physical education and the average school budget for physical education is only \$768. The current state of physical education is not acceptable.

With one-third of our children overweight or obese, the obesity/inactivity epidemic is costing our health care system \$147-\$210 billion a year. We must invest in our children's health upfront to help cut costs down the road. Evidence shows that physical education programs are effective at improving physical fitness, promoting the health of students, and decreasing obesity, and physical education teaches our children healthy habits that will serve them for the rest of their lives. Even more, physical activity has been shown to improve academic performance, behavior, and attendance. Physical education is a win-win.

In addition to the health and academic benefits, lack of high-quality and regular physical education is a national security issue. The growing pool of young men and women who want to serve in the military and can meet the basic requirements for service is rapidly shrinking; for instance, in 2010, 47 percent of males and 59 percent of females failed the military's entry-level physical fitness test. Those who do qualify for service are sustaining costly training-related injuries at a significantly higher rate than soldiers from past decades, showing insufficient physical fitness, and each discharged recruit due to a training-related injury costs the US Department of Defense \$57,500.

PEP is the ONLY dedicated source of federal funding for physical education, and reports show that this popular program is effective and has helped hundreds of thousands of children become more active. PEP provides desperately needed federal help while maintaining local flexibility to address school districts' unique needs. We have an obligation to keep kids active, and research to show that physical activity helps kids perform better in school. Physical education is essential to a child's overall education experience and a foundation for lifelong healthy living. These provisions in the Senate ESEA bill, S. 1177, the Every Child Achieves Act, will strengthen physical education policy and will help provide opportunities to meet the daily physical activity recommendations of 60 minutes. I urge you to invest in our children's health and success and support the Senate provisions on physical education as ESEA moves through conference.