

November 17, 2015

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
455 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Kline
2439 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bobby Scott
1201 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Alexander, Senator Murray, Congressman Kline and Congressman Scott,

As organizations dedicated to the health and wellness of our nation's youth, we strongly believe in the preventive benefits of health, fitness and well-being and have worked tirelessly with your staff members to ensure that health and physical education are elevated within federal education law to provide our nation's students with the fundamental tools for a healthy life.

We are thrilled that health and physical education are designated as core subjects and the Physical Education Program (PEP) grant is included in the US Senate's *Every Child Achieves Act*. These are key legislative priorities that our organizations have advocated for over the past several years. We appreciate the hard work and the foresight that went into including these critical provisions in the Senate education bill and ask that they remain as the bill is finalized at conference.

Created by the late US Senator Ted Stevens, the PEP grant has enabled schools to create innovative physical education and nutrition programs and train teachers in standards-based, cutting edge teaching methods for more than a decade. PEP requires schools to focus on sustainability of these essential programs and to ensure that the entire school community is benefitting from these activities and skills that are acquired. We respectfully request that PEP remain in the bill and continue to be an incubator for health and wellness in our nation's schools.

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When the federal education law was last reauthorized as *No Child Left Behind*, no one could have imagined that physical education and health education would have fallen by the wayside, but that is exactly what happened. As childhood obesity rates have spiked, the amount of time a student spends in health education and physical education has decreased. Most schools don't have the necessary funds or qualified personnel to provide students with quality instruction.

Today, one-third of our nation's children are overweight or obese therefore educating them in physical competence, health-related fitness and healthful behaviors is critical to their development and long-term success as healthy and productive citizens. Effective physical education and health education programs are essential components of a total K-12 curriculum. Recent studies, such as the [Health in Mind report](#), show that health and fitness are linked to improved academic performance, cognitive ability, and behavior as well as reduced truancy. The prestigious [Institute of Medicine](#) even noted the importance of physical education to help combat childhood obesity and recommended that it be designated as a core academic subject.

Physical education increases physical activity participation, health-related fitness, social responsibility and enjoyment of physical activity. Health education is also essential to support the formation of health-literate and health-conscious adults, and the development of lifelong healthful habits that can help reduce the enormous burden of health care costs to this nation. Additionally, the lack of physically fit and health-literate graduates has become a national security issue - being overweight or obese has become the leading medical reason why applicants fail to qualify for military service.

We watched as both chambers of Congress debated and marked up their education bills and there was a constant message regardless of party affiliation or chamber, which was that *No Child Left Behind* is a broken law that needs to be fixed. We could not agree more. As a result of that law physical education and health education have practically vanished from a student's school day. We learned that subjects not considered "core" are frequently marginalized and too often eliminated due to a lack of funding or administrative priority.

Senator Alexander and Senator Murray, Congressman Kline and Congressman Scott, thank you for your consideration of our comments and your continued support for our nation's youth. Please know we stand ready to assist as the two bills are conferenced.

National Organizations

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

Action for Healthy Kids

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American Academy of Pediatrics
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
American Council on Exercise
American Diabetes Association
American Institute for Cancer Research
American Public Health Association
American School Health Association
ASCD
Association of Accredited Public Health Programs
Association of State Public Health Nutritionists
Boys & Girls Clubs of America
Cairn Guidance, Inc
FlagHouse, Inc.
Focused Fitness
Green Schools National Network
HealthCorps
Healthy Schools Campaign
Hepatitis Foundation International
HOPSports, Inc.
International Health, Racquet and Sportsclub Association
National Association of County & City Health Officials
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Athletic Trainers' Association
National Coalition for Promoting Physical Activity
National Council of Youth Sports (NCYS)
National Council on Strength & Fitness
National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association (NIAAA)
National Physical Activity Plan Alliance
National Physical Education Institute
National Recreation and Park Association
National Women's Law Center
NEA Healthy Futures
PHIT America
Pop Warner Little Scholars

Prevent Cancer Foundation
Project Million
Richard Simmons' Ask America PE Crusade
Road Runners Club of America
Safe Routes to School National Partnership
School Social Work Association of America
Sports & Fitness Industry Association
SHAPE America - Society of Health and Physical Educators
Shape Up America!
Society for Public Health Education
SPARK/Sportime
The Cooper Institute
Trust for America's Health
US Corporate Games

State and Local Organizations

Alabama State Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance
Arizona Health and Physical Education
Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition
CA4Health
Connecticut Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance
Connecticut Association of Administrators of Health and Physical Education
Georgia Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance
Horizon Community Learning Center
Illinois Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance
Iowa Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance
Kansas Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance
Kentucky Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance
Louisiana Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance
Maine Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance
Manatee YourChoice Health Plan
Maryland State Advisory Council on Physical Fitness
Mascenic Education Association
Massachusetts Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance

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New Hampshire Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance
New Jersey Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance
New York State Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance
North Dakota Society for Health and Physical Educators
Ohio Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance
Oklahoma Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance
Oregon Society of Health and Physical Educators
Pennsylvania State Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance
Real Food for Kids - Montgomery, AL
Seneca Nation of Indians
Society of Health and Physical Educators Florida
Society of Health and Physical Educators Idaho
Society of Health and Physical Educators Michigan
Society of Health and Physical Educators Montana
Society of Health and Physical Educators Nebraska
Society of Health and Physical Educators New Mexico
Society of Health and Physical Educators South Dakota
Society of Health and Physical Educators Washington
South Carolina Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance
Tennessee Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance
Texas Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance
Thomas Jefferson University, College of Population Health
Virginia Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance
Wisconsin Health & Physical Education
Wyoming Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance