

January 9, 2012

The Honorable Tom Harkin, Chairman
The Honorable Michael B. Enzi, Ranking Member
Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Enzi:

The undersigned organizations thank you for including provisions in your committee mark for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2011 that support quality physical education and nutrition education in our nation's schools. These programs help provide a sound foundation for the development of healthy and productive adults.

Childhood obesity in the United States is at epidemic proportions. The number of overweight pre-schoolers jumped 36 percent from 1999-2000 and nearly one in three children are obese or overweight.

Since children spend the majority of their time in school, it is critical that our educational institutions support and encourage activities and curricular instruction that allow students to be physically active and obtain the knowledge and skills they will need to enjoy a lifetime of good health. Furthermore, research has found a strong correlation between school-based physical activity, including physical education, and higher academic performance.

National guidelines recommend that children engage in at least 60 minutes of physical activity on most, and preferably every day of the week, with 30 minutes of it taking place during the school day. However, only 3.8 percent of elementary, 7.9 percent of middle, and 2.1 percent of high schools currently provide daily physical education or its equivalent for the entire school year. Twenty-two percent of schools do not require students to take any physical education at all.

Physical education programs are essential to protecting the health of the nation's children, but they are only part of the equation. Students also need to learn about good nutrition habits so they can balance calories with physical activity. Research has shown that many children do not achieve caloric balance, which can lead to excess weight gain and obesity. We commend you for the including the following in the committee mark that will help to provide both quality physical education and nutrition activities.

- Under the newly consolidated Successful, Safe, and Healthy Students State Grants, states that receive a grant shall be required to establish a statewide physical education requirement consistent with widely-recognized standards.
- States that accept grant funding will also be required to collect and/or use existing available data that allow school personnel to examine, measure, and improve school-level conditions for learning.
- Physical education indicators will inform school personnel as well as parents about the quality of their school's physical education program and if necessary, take appropriate corrective actions.
- Grant recipients will be required to allocate not less than 20 percent of the funds to promote physical activity, education, fitness, and nutrition.

Thank you again for championing programs that incorporate physical activity and nutrition into the school environment. We believe that incorporating health in an education bill is a win/win for students– both physically and academically. We look forward to working with you to preserve and strengthen these measures as the bill moves forward in the legislative process.

Sincerely,

A World Fit For Kids!
Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
Action for Healthy Kids
Active Network
Alliance of the American Dental Association
American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance
American Association for Physical Activity and Recreation
American Association on Health and Disability
American Council on Exercise
American Diabetes Association
American Heart Association
American Institute for Cancer Research
American Medical Athletic Association
American Public Health Association
American Running Association
American Society of Bariatric Physicians
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
Association of State & Territorial Public Health Nutrition Directors
California Center for Public Health Advocacy
CANFIT
Center for Science in the Public Interest
Chicago Healthy Schools Campaign
Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition
Community Action Partnership
Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago Children
Consumer Federation of America
Defeat Diabetes Foundation
Directors of Health Promotion and Education
Earth Day Network
El Camino Children and Family Services
Everlast Climbing
First Focus Campaign for Children
Fitness Forward
HopeLab
Indiana Rural Health Association
International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub Association
KaBOOM!
League of American Bicyclists
Marathon Kids
MEND Foundation
MYZONE
National Association for Sport and Physical Education
National Association of Chronic Disease Directors
National Association of County and City Health Officials

National Association of School Nurses
National Athletic Trainers' Association
National Coalition for Promoting Physical Activity
National Congress of Black Women, Inc.
National PTA
National WIC Association
Obesity Action Coalition
Ohio Public Health Association
Papa Ola Lokahi (Native Hawaiian Health Board)
Partners for a Healthy Nevada
Playworks
Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association
Safe Routes to School National Partnership
Save the Children
School Nutrition Association
Shape Up America!
South Carolina Eat Smart, Move More Coalition
SPARK Programs
Street Soccer USA
The Cooper Institute
TRI-PAC Health and Wellness Advocacy
Trust for America's Health
United Fresh Produce Association
United States Tennis Association
Up2Us
Zamzee