

July 1, 2016

[Legislator/Governor name & address]

Dear [insert Sen./Rep. name],

We, the undersigned organizations, are writing to urge you to protect children's health by not compromising our state's strong daily physical education (P.E.) requirement for all students in grades K-12. While we understand that compromises will be needed to pass a budget in Illinois, we strongly oppose bargaining away the lifelong health benefits of P.E., and its positive impacts on children's behavior and academic performance.

One in three Illinois children is overweight or obese and at increased risk for chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes. Studies show that regular moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (MVPA) can reduce the risk of these diseases. There is also a significant body of research showing that children who are more physically active perform better on standardized tests and have improved on-task behavior in class.

This research has propelled a movement in Illinois toward "enhanced physical education," an evidence-based strategy recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to get kids moving more during P.E. class time. Illinois recently updated its learning standards for physical development and health and will also soon begin fitness assessments for all students in grades 3-12 in an effort to shift physical education to focus on the lifelong health and fitness skills children will need to thrive. At a time when physical educators, schools, and districts are working hard to improve their P.E. programs to keep kids physically active, weakening any requirements through waivers or exemptions from P.E. will only stymie their efforts.

Daily, high-quality physical education is critical to the health and academic well-being of kids across the state. Physical education is more than just physical activity. In P.E. students learn the skills they need to lead healthy lives. P.E. also enhances academic success. It should not be pitted against other core subjects when students create their academic schedules.

We urge you to reject any policy proposals that would have the net effect of less P.E. for any of Illinois' kids.

If you have any questions on this matter, please contact Janna Simon, MPH, Program Manager, Illinois Public Health Institute (janna.simon@iphionline.org or 312-850-4744).

Thank you for your consideration and for your public service.

Sincerely,

Elissa Bassler, CEO- *Illinois Public Health Institute*

Mark Peysakhovich, Senior Director of Government Relations, *Illinois- American Heart Association*

Janna Simon, Program Manager- *Illinois Alliance to Prevent Obesity*