

June 12, 2013

The Honorable Tom Harkin, Chairman
Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin:

The undersigned organizations thank you for introducing the Fitness Integrated with Teaching Kids (FIT Kids) Act. This bill will help our children obtain a much needed head start on a healthy life by providing regular, quality physical education.

As you know, childhood obesity in the United States is at epidemic proportions. Nearly one in three children is overweight or obese. Since children spend a significant 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.

The Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans recommend that children engage in at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day of the week, with 30 minutes of it taking place during the school day. Sadly, 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.

Given the strong evidence of the importance of physical education and the current risks to our children's well-being by physical inactivity and a lack of quality physical education programs, FIT Kids is needed now more than ever. The new Institute of Medicine report, *Educating the Student Body: Taking Physical Activity and Physical Education to School*, recently reinforced the evidence and need, and offered several recommendations for quality physical education courses and increased physical activity throughout the school day, including some of the policies addressed in FIT Kids. Specifically, the bill would:

- Implement programs to support evidenced-based physical education, activity, and fitness, and nutrition by promoting activities that: increase and enable active student participation; are comprehensive; help students understand, improve, or maintain their physical well-being; enhance the physical, mental, social, and emotional development of students; and establish lifelong healthy lifestyles.
- Authorize grants to states to develop or enhance data collection systems that will give local leaders the information they need to improve physical education and activity within their schools and communities.
- Support professional development for health and physical education teachers and principals to boost students' ability to learn, and to promote healthy lifestyles and physical activity.
- Include opportunities for parents and guardians to support their children in leading a healthy and active life.
- Provide assistance to schools to provide equal physical activity opportunities for students with disabilities.

We commend your leadership on physical education and this bill. We look forward to working with you to move this bill through Congress.

Sincerely,

A World Fit For Kids!

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

American Alliance for Health, Physical Education,
Recreation, and Dance

American Association on Health and Disability

American College of Preventive Medicine

American College of Sports Medicine

American Council on Exercise

American Heart Association | American Stroke
Association

American Public Health Association

American Sleep Apnea Association

American Society of Bariatric Physicians

California Center for Public Health Advocacy

Campaign to End Obesity Action Fund

Center for Global Policy Solutions

Center for Science in the Public Interest

Children's Action Alliance

Community Action Partnership

Day One

Defeat Diabetes Foundation

Earth Day Network

El Camino Children and Family Services

Everlast Climbing

Healthy Schools Campaign

Indiana Rural Health Association

International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub
Association

KaBOOM!

La Crosse County Health Department

Lakeshore Foundation

Maine Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics

Marathon Kids

Minnesota AHPERD

National Association of Chronic Disease Directors

National Association of County and City Health
Officials

National Athletic Trainers' Association

National Coalition to Promote Physical Activity

National Consumers League

National Council of Youth Sports

National PTA

National Research Center for Women and Families

National WIC Association

North American Society for Pediatric

Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition

Obesity Action Coalition

Oregon Public Health Institute

Partners for a Healthy Nevada

Partnership for Prevention

Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association

Public Health Institute

Save the Children

School Nutrition Association

Shape Up America!

SPARK

TRI-PAC Health and Wellness Advocacy

Trust for America's Health

USA Cheer

USA Deaf Sports Federation

United States Tennis Association

Varsity Brands

YMCA of the USA

Young People's Healthy Heart Program