

HB 11-1069, Concerning Measures to Increase Physical Activity in Public Schools
House Education Committee
February 7, 2011

Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee. My name is Kyle Legleiter, and I am the President of the Colorado Public Health Association. We are Colorado's largest association of public health professionals, and our members from all corners of the state are united in support of House Bill 1069. We urge you to vote in favor of this bill. It will ensure that all schools in Colorado provide our children with the opportunities to be active and to play while also protecting local communities' control over their schools.

Each year, our Association surveys our members to identify their top priorities for protecting the health of Colorado's citizens. For 2011, our members ranked physical inactivity among children as their number one concern for our state's health.

As public health professionals, we know that children today are projected to be the first generation in history that will not live as long as their parents. To be clear, this has never happened before. Physical inactivity, obesity, and the chronic diseases related to them are the reasons why our children will have both shorter lives and a lower quality of life than we will have. Members of the committee, today you have an important opportunity to help make those predictions about our children's future false by voting in favor of this bill.

Previous speakers have already described the tremendous benefits of play and physical activity. They are good for children's physical health, for their mental health, and for their academic achievement. The research documenting these benefits is both clear and conclusive, yet we know that too few children in Colorado experience them. We could more than fill every seat at Invesco Field with the number of children in Colorado who do not currently achieve adequate amounts of physical activity in their daily lives.

The consequences of doing nothing to address this problem are no longer hypothetical. We are already starting to see them. Diseases such as Type II Diabetes that were previously unheard of among children are now increasingly common, and the expenses for treating these chronic illnesses strain the budgets of more and more Colorado families that are already struggling in these tough economic times. The impact of physical inactivity among children also stretches beyond individual families. Recently, leaders from our nation's military reported that our armed services are struggling to find recruits who are physically fit enough to meet the demands of serving to protect and defend our country.

Members of the Committee, I urge you to vote in favor of House Bill 1069. It is a vital investment in the health of our children and our state. HB 1069 would establish a floor for what we will minimally accept for our kids. If passed, this bill will ensure that no 7-year old in Colorado will be required to sit and remain sedentary for an entire school day. Without HB 1069, children's opportunities to be active and to play will remain vulnerable to cuts and shifting priorities in our state's schools. More than one third of all children in Colorado live in neighborhoods or communities without a park, playground, recreation center, or another safe

place to play. House Bill 1069 would ensure that none of these children attend a school that also denies them the opportunity to play.

Just as important, HB 1069 also recognizes and capitalizes on Colorado's long-standing value for local control over schools. This bill broadly defines opportunities for physical activity. As a result, local school districts would have great flexibility in the ways that they meet the standards it would establish. Local schools will be able to provide a mix of recess, physical education, classroom activity breaks, or other forms of activity that allow them to operate within their existing means and resources. The local control that schools and districts will continue to have in determining how best to provide physical activity for their students will also create exciting opportunities for communities across the state to learn from each other's example.

The Colorado Public Health Association's members urge you to vote yes on House Bill 1069. We are all Colorado residents. Many of us are parents of children attending public schools across the state, from Lamar to Grand Junction, from Greeley to Pueblo. Today, we are here to ask that you join with us and with the over 85% of Colorado parents who support opportunities for physical activity for all Colorado children. Please vote yes on House Bill 1069. Thank you.