

Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Murray:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the “Every Child Ready for College or Career Act of 2015” and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) reauthorization. We applaud your efforts to move forward quickly on this important legislation. We are pleased to see that physical education was recognized in Senator Alexander’s draft bill. However, we are strongly opposed to the elimination of the Carol M. White Physical Education Program (PEP) for the reasons cited below.

The American Heart Association, including the American Stroke Association, is a nationwide organization, with 150 local offices, 2,600 employees, and more than 22.5 million volunteers and supporters around the country. We are the nation’s oldest and largest voluntary organization dedicated to fighting cardiovascular diseases. As such, we support strengthening standards for physical education throughout K-12 education to address the growing obesity epidemic and cardiovascular health crisis in the United States.

PEP provides grants to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and community-based organizations to initiate, expand, or enhance physical education programs, including after-school programs, for students in kindergarten through 12th grade.ⁱ Evidence suggests that quality physical education programs are effective and more essential today than ever. Embedded within the program are important outcome measures around the amount of time students are physically active in schools and the number of students who are achieving a certain level of physical fitness.

Regular physical activity is associated with a healthier, longer life and with lower risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, and some cancers.ⁱⁱ In addition, physically fit children have higher scholastic achievement, better classroom behavior, greater ability to focus, and less absenteeism than their unfit counterparts.^{iii iv} Unfortunately, many youth are increasingly sedentary throughout their day, meeting neither physical education nor national physical activity recommendations.

Physical education in schools has been decreasing in recent years.^{vi} Only 3.8% of elementary, 7.9% of middle, and 2.1% of high schools provide daily physical education or its equivalent for the entire school year.^{vii} Twenty-two percent of schools do not require students to take any physical education at all.^{viii} Nationwide, only 51.8% of high school students attend at least some physical education (PE) classes and 31.5% of those students have daily physical education.^{ix}

In 2014, the U.S. Department of Education awarded [67 grants](#) to LEAs and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) to implement comprehensive, integrated physical education programs for their students through PEP.^x In its 13 years, PEP has reached 56,000 children, many of whom showed improvements in muscular strength, muscular endurance, and cardiovascular endurance. Since the average school budget for physical education is only \$764 per year, these grants, which are the only federal spending for physical education, have proven invaluable in addressing physical education and activity in schools. Currently, only ten percent of applicants are awarded grants out of the thousands that apply.^{xi} Clearly PEP is in high demand.

If Chairman Alexander’s current draft moves forward without reauthorizing PEP, many students will lose the only support they receive for physical education programs, the cornerstone for increasing the overall quantity of physical activity in schools. Maintaining this funding is particularly important in light of the 37 percent cut PEP sustained during the fiscal year 2015 appropriations.

Given the clear data regarding the need for increased physical activity among students, and the fact that PEP continues to be funded through the appropriations process, we strongly urge you to maintain this program as you work to reauthorize ESEA.

In addition, we believe that ESEA reauthorization should also:

- Require annual reporting by local educational agencies regarding:
 - whether the school follows an age-appropriate physical education curriculum for all students that adheres to national and state standards and the amount of time that students in kindergarten through grade 12 are required to spend in physical education, disaggregated by grade level; and reporting the results of fitness assessment in an aggregate manner.
- Support professional development for health and physical education teachers that is specific to their field to boost students' ability to learn, and to promote healthy lifestyles and physical activity.
- Assure that physical education teachers are licensed and certified.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment, please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or if you would like to discuss PEP and physical education programs in schools to ensure increased student achievement.

ⁱ <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/whitephysed/index.html>

ⁱⁱ Eyre H, Kahn R, Robertson RM, Clark NG, Doyle C, Hong Y, Gansler T, Glynn T, Smith RA, Taubert K, Thun MJ, American Cancer S, American Diabetes A and American Heart A. Preventing cancer, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes: a common agenda for the American Cancer Society, the American Diabetes Association, and the American Heart Association. *Circulation*. 2004;109:3244-55.

ⁱⁱⁱ Shore SM, Sachs ML, Lidicker JR, et. al. Decreased scholastic achievement in overweight middle school students. *Obesity* 2008;16,1535–1538.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *The Association Between School-Based Physical Activity, Including Physical Education, and Academic Performance* Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; 2010

^{iv} Geier AB, et. al. The Relationship Between Relative Weight and School Attendance. *Obesity* 2007. 15:2157-2161.

^v Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *The Association Between School-Based Physical Activity, Including Physical Education, and Academic Performance* Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; 2010

^{vi} K-12 Education: School-based physical education and sports programs. 2012.

^{vii} Lee SM, Burgeson CR, Fulton JE and Spain CG. Physical education and physical activity: results from the School Health Policies and Programs Study 2006. *The Journal of school health*. 2007;77:435-63.

^{viii} 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans. 2008.

^{ix} Eaton DK, Kann L, Kinchen S, Shanklin S, Flint KH, Hawkins J, Harris WA, Lowry R, McManus T, Chyen D, Whittle L, Lim C, Wechsler H, Centers for Disease C and Prevention. Youth risk behavior surveillance - United States, 2011. *MMWR Surveill Summ*. 2012;61:1-162.

^x <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/whitephysed/2014awards.html>

^{xi} http://www.phitamerica.org/New_PE.htm