
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 6525 (as amended by House "A")*

AN ACT CONCERNING CHILDHOOD OBESITY AND PHYSICAL EXERCISE IN SCHOOLS.

SUMMARY:

This bill requires public schools to include a total of 20 minutes of physical exercise in each regular school day for all elementary school students, rather than just those in kindergarten through grade five. (Neither the bill nor the statutes define "elementary school.")

The bill requires each local and regional board of education, by October 1, 2013, to adopt policies it deems appropriate concerning any school employee being involved, during the regular school day, in (1) preventing, as a form of discipline, an elementary school student from participating in the required period of physical exercise or (2) requiring any student in grade kindergarten through twelve to engage in physical activity as a form of discipline.

The bill also establishes a 19-member task force to study the effects of obesity on children's health and report its finding to the Children's Committee by October 1, 2014.

*House Amendment "A" (1) requires school boards to adopt policies on using physical exercise as a form of discipline rather than prohibiting employees from doing this, (2) extends the physical exercise requirement to all elementary grades, and (3) changes the task force's charge by requiring it to explore ways to increase children's physical activity instead of to explore the implementation of a tax on large-size sugary drinks.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2013 except for the task force provision, which is effective on October 1, 2013.

SCHOOL EMPLOYEE

With regard to the policies the boards of education must adopt, the bill defines a school employee as a (1) teacher, substitute teacher, school administrator, school superintendent, guidance counselor, psychologist, social worker, nurse, physician, school paraprofessional, or coach employed by a local or regional board of education or working in a public elementary, middle, or high school; or (2) a person who, in the performance of his or her duties, has regular contact with students and who provides services to or on behalf of students in public, elementary, or high school under a contract with the local or regional board of education.

CHILDHOOD OBESITY TASK FORCE

The bill establishes a task force to study the effects of obesity on children's health. The task force must:

1. gather and maintain current information on childhood obesity that can be used to better understand its impact on children's health;
2. examine the nutrition standards for all food the state procures;
3. explore ways to increase children's physical activity;
4. recommend the implementation of a pilot program, through a local or regional board of education, to schedule recess before lunch in elementary school; and
5. advise the governor and General Assembly on how to coordinate and administer state programs to reduce the incidence of childhood obesity.

The task force members must include:

1. the commissioners of Children and Families, Education, Public Health (DPH), and Social Services, or their designees;
2. the Children's Committee chairpersons, vice-chairpersons, and ranking members;

3. the Senate President and House Speaker, or their designees;
4. the House and Senate majority and minority leaders, or their designees;
5. a licensed dietitian-nutritionist with a background in food service appointed by the DPH commissioner; and
6. two members of the public appointed by the Children's Committee chairpersons, one of whom is a children's health matters advocate and the other is an academic, civic, or cultural leader specializing in children's health matters.

All task force appointments must be made by July 31, 2013. The appointing authorities fill any vacancies.