Testimony of Joe Moore, IHRSA President & CEO  
International Health, Racquet and Sportsclub Association (IHRSA)  
S.B. No. 767 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING CHILDHOOD OBESITY.  
Thursday, February 16, 2017

Senator Moore, Senator Suzio, Rep. Urban and Members of the Committee on Children,

On behalf of the International Health, Racquet and Sportsclub Association (IHRSA), I would like to voice my support for Senate Bill 767, An Act Concerning Child Obesity. The legislation outlines several policies to improve the health of children in Connecticut child care centers, including the provision of daily opportunities for physical activity.

We believe this legislation could make a substantial contribution to policies that encourage more physical activity and exercise at an early age, and, thus, help address the issue of child obesity and physical inactivity.

The obesity and physical inactivity epidemics in the United States are well known; in most states—including Connecticut—over a quarter of citizens are considered obese. In Connecticut, 15.3% of low income children ages 2-4 are obese. Obese youth are more likely to have risk factors for heart disease, to have pre-diabetes, and to experience bone and joint problems, sleep apnea, and psychological problems. Increasingly, health and science professionals highlight the link between physical inactivity and obesity among children and adolescents. Evidence shows that increasing physical activity can help kids lose weight, improve academic performance, insulin response, blood lipid levels in obese children, and prevent obesity and related chronic diseases like diabetes in adulthood.

The issue has gone beyond public health, as increasing levels of obesity and physical inactivity are directly linked to increasing government health care costs. Nationally, 86% of healthcare expenditures go toward diagnosing and treating chronic diseases, many of which have been linked to obesity and physical inactivity.

1 State of Obesity  
2 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Child Obesity Facts.  
Connecticut has some of the nation’s highest health care costs, ranking 4th out of 51 in healthcare spending per capita. There is an obvious need to implement public policies that address the problem before it becomes even tougher to mitigate.

In Connecticut, 576 health and fitness clubs provide a safe, supportive environment for over 944,000 residents to exercise and participate in a variety of programs and classes designed to improve their health. Many clubs offer membership options for families and 27 clubs in Connecticut offer programs specifically for children and adolescents. IHRSA, as the not-for-profit trade association representing health and fitness facilities, gyms, spas, sports clubs, and suppliers worldwide, is committed to advancing physical activity for all ages. We encourage the legislature and advisory council to support effective initiatives such as physical activity in child care centers and schools to encourage more active lifestyles for Connecticut’s young residents and effect societal changes toward a more fit and healthy state.

We encourage the Committee on Children to support and advance Senate Bill 767. We would welcome the opportunity to provide you with any resources or information that you think may be useful in advancing the legislation. Please contact Amy Banham, Vice President of Health Promotion and Health Policy at aeb@ihrsa.org.

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8 Kaiser Family Foundation