Testimony of Joe Moore, IHRSA President & CEO
International Health, Racquet and Sportsclub Association (IHRSA)
H.B. 7250 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE IMPROVEMENT OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT THROUGH PLAY.
Tuesday, March 5, 2019

Members of the Education Committee

On behalf of the International Health, Racquet and Sportsclub Association (IHRSA), I would like to voice my support for House Bill 7250, An Act Concerning the Improvement of Child Development Through Play. The legislation would increase by 30 minutes each day, to a total of 50 minutes, physical activity or undirected play time offered in elementary schools for children in grades K-5.

We believe this legislation could make a substantial difference in encouraging and facilitating more physical activity for children during an important time in their development.

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 a number of physical and mental health benefits. Evidence shows that increasing physical activity can help kids lose weight, improve academic performance, boost insulin response, and prevent obesity and related chronic diseases like diabetes in adulthood. Additionally, opportunities for unstructured play like recess can have cognitive, social, and emotional benefits for kids.

The issue has gone beyond public health, as increasing levels of obesity and physical inactivity are directly linked to increasing government health care costs. But physical activity is a clear solution. If 100% of kids aged 8-11 were active for 25 minutes daily, $60 billion in lifetime costs could be saved.

References:
1 State of Obesity
2 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Child Obesity Facts
medical costs and lost wages could be saved. There is an obvious need to implement public policies that address the problem before it becomes even tougher to mitigate. 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 nearly one million 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 Education Committee to support and advance House Bill 7250. 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 Alexandra Larcom, Senior Manager of Health Promotion & Health Policy at ab@ihrsa.org.

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8 Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health
9 Kaiser Family Foundation