Dear Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez and all of the esteemed members of the Education Committee,

I am writing today in support of HB7250 AN ACT CONCERNING THE IMPROVEMENT OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT THROUGH PLAY. I whole-heartedly support the bill. My daughter is a fourth grader at Calf Pen Elementary in Milford. My daughter, a normally adaptable and social child, has struggled immensely this year, with free time to unwind at school. She constantly complains about lack of recess time and abundance of “boring” structured time. She struggles to stay focused in class and is often distracted when she needs to pay attention during lessons. I have thought of pulling her and sending her to private schools, which seem to be better at understanding and meeting kids’ needs. I shouldn’t have to pay tens of thousands of dollars each year for my daughter to attend a school that understands the needs of children and adjusts to meet those needs.

I BELIEVE THIS BILL IS A CHANCE FOR CONNECTICUT TO LEAD THE COUNTRY IN AN EFFORT TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN IN AN ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT.

Many of the Countries leading the way in test scores understand that recess does not replace or take away from academic and instructional time, rather, it enhances it. Why do they need undirected play/longer recess time? There has been an explosion of research recently showing us how necessary recess is, and that giving kids MORE recess actually improves their ability to focus, retain information, and perform better academically. Texas Christian University kinesiologist Dr. Debbie Rhea went to Finland to find out why their test scores are better than ours and to get a better understanding of what they do differently. The most notable difference in the school day was the length of recess; kids in Finland get 75 minutes of recess and physical activity breaks in the day. She came back to Texas and started the Liink Project (Let’s Inspire Innovation ‘n Kids) which, in part, added a total of 60 minutes of undirected play/recess in the school day, not including physical education. The children who have been part of this trial come back from recess more focused, more organized, and are getting through their lessons ahead of schedule. They are making more eye contact during class and are less distracted. Liink’s mission is “To Bridge the gap between academics and the social, emotional and healthy well-being of children. The Liink Project aims to develop the whole child through increased recess and character development.” One first grade teacher, involved in the project said, “They’re exploring, looking for bugs in the field. They didn’t do that before on the playground. I feel bad that we didn’t let them do this before. It’s emotional to see. We couldn’t go back to the old way.” Teachers also reported that problem-solving and critical thinking skills improved as the year progressed. Public Schools in Arizona are now required by law to provide two recess breaks for students each day for k-3, after Arizonans For Recess and School Wellness pushed for legislation.

The American Academy of Pediatrics research article on the crucial role of recess in school states that “children develop intellectual constructs and cognitive understanding through interactive, manipulative experiences. This type of exploratory experience is a feature of play in an unstructured social environment.” It goes on to share that “optimal cognitive processing in a child necessitates a period of interruption after a period of concentrated instruction. The benefits of these interruptions are best served by unstructured breaks rather than by merely shifting from
1 cognitive task to another to diminish stresses and distractions that interfere with cognitive processing." Regarding the social and emotional benefits of recess in the school day, it states that “recess promotes social and emotional learning and development for children by offering them a time to engage in peer interactions in which they practice and role play essential social skills. This type of activity, under adult supervision, extends teaching in the classroom to augment the school’s social climate. Through play at recess, children learn valuable communication skills, including negotiation, cooperation, sharing, and problem solving as well as coping skills, such as perseverance and self-control.”

This all just begs the question- why are some schools in our state (my daughter’s included) giving kids the absolute bare minimum recess time required? We know academic performance is important. But what is MOST important is meeting the needs of the children. I believe that when we meet kids needs, academic performance improves. I believe that if we review the research carefully, we will realize we are not meeting our kids’ needs in the public school system here in Connecticut. My daughter is 10 years old. She is in the confines of a school building for 6 hours and 40 minutes in a 7 hour school day. EVERY DAY THAT GOES BY THAT THIS REMAINS THE CASE, WE ARE FAILING HER AND ALL OF HER PEERS.

I beg of you, please, PLEASE seriously consider this bill. Review the research. Consider what is best for our children, and consider how Connecticut could be a shining example of the saying “when you know better, you do better.”

I’ve included links to my sources below, as well as additional sources for you to review. Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,
Katie Salinas
Milford CT

Sources
http://www.phitamerica.org/News_Archive/Quadruple_Recess.htm
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https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/131/1/183

More:
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