



THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

BILL: House Bill 516 – Public School Students – Daily Physical Activity (Student Health and Fitness Act)

SPONSOR: Delegate Walker, *et al.*

HEARING DATE: February 19, 2020

COMMITTEE: Ways and Means

CONTACT: Intergovernmental Affairs Office, 301-780-8411

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS House Bill 516 – Public School Students – Daily Physical Activity (Student Health and Fitness Act)**, which establishes the goal that each public elementary school student be provided a minimum of 150 minutes per week of daily physical activity programs (including recess), with at least 90 of those 150 minutes being physical education. The program would be age-appropriate and, when necessary, consistent with a student's Individualized Education Program.

House Bill 516 is an important first step in changing the health trajectory of our young people. This legislation aligns with national recommendations for a *minimum* of 30 minutes of physical activity daily through recess, active classroom lessons, in-class physical activity breaks, and physical education.¹ Increasing physical activity leads to a better quality of life, longer life expectancy and reduced risk for several chronic diseases.²

In addition, House Bill 516 satisfies one of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Healthy People 2020 goals—"[i]ncrease the proportion of school districts that require or recommend elementary school recess for an appropriate period of time[.]"³ Establishing a regular routine of physical activity for our youngest

¹ Rick Fortier, *et al.*, Let's Go!, *5-2-1-0 Goes to School Wellness Policy Guide*, at 14, https://www.phipps.conservatory.org/assets/documents/Wellness_Policy_Guide.pdf (emphasis added).

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *School Health Guidelines to Promote Healthy Eating and Physical Activity*, Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (Sept. 16, 2011), <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/npao/pdf/mmwr-school-health-guidelines.pdf>.

³ HealthyPeople.gov, "Physical Activity: PA-7," <https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/physical-activity/objectives> (last visited Feb. 18, 2020).

residents is a powerful way to improve the future of Prince George's County and the State. As of 2016, in Prince George's County, 16.4% of high school students were obese, compared with 12.6% in the State overall.⁴ One-third of the County's children under the age of five, who were Women's Infants and Children (WIC) participants between July and December 2018, were overweight or obese.⁵ Obese children are at increased risk of remaining obese as adults, developing early atherosclerosis, hypertension, type 2 diabetes, metabolic syndrome, and fatty liver disease, and dying prematurely⁶ when compared to non-obese children.

Furthermore, this legislation will require the Maryland State Department of Education to collect data from each public elementary school and publish that data on its website. This provision will hold each jurisdiction accountable to its students and its commitment to promoting their health and wellness.

As House Bill 516 bolsters decades of research and recommendations on strategies for preventing childhood obesity through physical activity, inaction on this bill will indicate complacency with current statistics. Prince George's County does not accept this future for our children; therefore, the Office of the County Executive urges the State to strongly consider the positive impact of this legislation.

For the reasons stated above, the Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS House Bill 516** and asks for a **FAVORABLE** report.

⁴ Prince George's County Health Department, "Adolescents who are Obese," <http://www.pgchealthzone.org/index.php?module=indicators&controller=index&action=view&indicatorId=2250&localeId=1260> (last updated Aug. 2018).

⁵ Maryland Department of Health, Maryland Diabetes Action Plan, November 2019, p. 28.

⁶ Bass R & Eneli I. Severe Childhood Obesity: An Under-Recognized and Growing Health Problem. *Postgrad Med J.* 2015 Nov;91(1081):639-45.