



Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

EMPOWERMENT • OPPORTUNITY • INCLUSION

Ways and Means Committee

HB 516: Public School Students - Daily Physical Activity (Student Health and Fitness Act)

February 19, 2020

Position: Support

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council (DD Council) is a statewide public policy organization that promotes the full inclusion of people with developmental disabilities in all aspects of community life by eliminating barriers, creating opportunities, empowering people, and promoting innovation. The DD Council studies and analyzes legislation, programs, and policies relative to their impact on individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. It is from that perspective that we support HB 516.

WHY is this legislation important?

- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires the provision of a free, appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment in which a student's needs can be met.
- Research indicates that regular physical activity, included in children's school curricula, produces physical, psychological and intellectual benefits. This is equally true for students with disabilities.
- Adequate accommodations and supports are essential to the success of the over 100,000 students with disabilities educated in Maryland's public schools.
- Accommodations and supports in physical education make achieving full participation in school life more possible for students with disabilities.

WHAT does this legislation do?

- Sets a goal all students engage in at least 150 minutes of physical activity per week
- Requires the Commission of School Construction to assess the accessibility of outdoor and indoor school recreation spaces 12 for students with disabilities.
- Physical education must be adapted, if necessary, so that a student with a disability can participate in the activities alongside their peers without disabilities. Any specific needs should be addressed by a student's individualized education program (IEP).

HB 516 ensures that all physical activity is developmentally appropriate and addresses the needs of all students, including students with disabilities, therefore, the DD Council supports HB 516.

Contact: Keith Walmsley, Director of Public Policy Initiatives
kwalmsley@md-council.org