

BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Mayor, City of Baltimore

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*Chair, Baltimore City Board of
School Commissioners*

Dr. Sonja Brookins Santelises
Chief Executive Officer

**Testimony of
The Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners
In Opposition of
House Bill 1296
Public School Students –
Daily Physical Activity
(Student Health and Fitness Act)**

March 3, 2021

The Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners (the Board) understands the issue of the need to get children involved in physical activity. The Board also commends the sponsor for his efforts. However, the Board must oppose House Bill 1296, not because it is not a good idea in theory, but it is unrealistic as a goal and would increase costs to school systems, without additional funding.

Currently, every public school must have a program of physical education that is given in a planned and sequential manner to all students in order to develop their good health and physical fitness and improve their motor coordination and physical skills. However, the specific curriculum and course of study is set by each local board of education. In City Schools, we have anywhere between 45 minutes to 100 minutes of physical education in elementary schools.

Most City Schools currently schedule 45 minutes of PE per week for PK-8 students. As written, the 90 minutes of PE class is aspirational, but unrealistic. City Schools estimates that it would require City Schools to add 1 PE teacher to each school. There are 137 schools with grades K-8 at \$97,026 per teacher, it would cost an additional \$13,292,562 more dollars per year to double PE instruction in pk-8 schools in FY 20. This cost would increase each year as salaries increase. (However, there are some schools that currently provide PE 2 or more times per week and would not need additional staffing to do so and the costs may be slightly lower.)

It should also be noted that if schools must invest in an additional PE teacher, those would likely result in the reduction of another certified teacher in the building. Requiring an extra 45 minutes of PE instruction per week will take away from other valuable resource classes, such as fine arts, computer science and library/media. Currently, the minimum staffing requirement for PE teachers is .5 per school. If passed, this legislation would require that most City Schools increase their current physical education staffing, without additional funding.

City Schools noted that the reporting requirements in the legislation are not realistic. City Schools elementary scheduling does not include seat time for any areas. City Schools has scheduling guidance that schools are expected to follow, but we cannot glean from a schedule how much time a student spends in PE class weekly. We do not schedule for recess at all – I believe its typically built in to the lunch block of a student's schedule. The only way City Schools could report annually on the number of minutes spent weekly in PE class and doing other physical activity including recess would be to send out a survey to all schools requesting this information.

For the foregoing reasons, the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners urges an **UNFAVORABLE** report.

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