

February 2014

**REQUEST:** *Invest in our nation's future by supporting legislation to require health education and physical education as "core" subjects, and to sustain federal programs that contribute to both health and academic achievement.*

Specifically, Congress should:

- Enact the PHYSICAL Act and support any legislation that would elevate both Health Education and Physical Education to core subjects.
- Pass comprehensive ESEA legislation that would ensure schools have the option to use ESEA Title I and Title II funds for physical education and health education programs and teacher professional development.



### **About the PHYSICAL Act:**

- The PHYSICAL Act amends the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (No Child Left Behind) to elevate physical and health education to "core subjects" under federal Law.
- The bill was introduced as in the Senate by Senator Tom Udall of New Mexico (S. 392) in February 2013.
- A companion bill was introduced in the House by Congresswoman Marcia Fudge of Ohio (H.R. 2816) in May 2013.

**CNHEO also supports the following legislation, amended to include both health education and physical education as core subjects:**

#### ***Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)***

Health education and physical education are not included in the Common Core State Standards. Federal categorical grant programs that specify health instruction vary widely in adoption between and within states. State and local laws and regulations for comprehensive school health education also vary widely between states as well as within states.

#### ***Healthy Lifestyles and Prevention America Act (HeLP America Act)***

Introduced as S.39 by Senator Tom Harkin in January 2013, the bill adds physical education to the existing set of "core subjects," and engages parents and teachers in promoting physical activity and healthy eating opportunities.

#### ***Student Success Act***

Introduced and passed out the House Education and Workforce Committee in July 2013 as a substitute ESEA bill but does not include health education and physical education as core subjects.

#### ***Strengthening America's Schools Act***

Introduced by Sen. Tom Harkin in June 2013 to replace ESEA and give states the flexibility to institute their own college and career-ready standards, performance targets, academic assessments, and accountability models that will improve schools.

#### ***Every Child Ready for College or Career Act of 2013***

Introduced by Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-TN) in June 2013 and includes physical education as a core academic subject. CNHEO advocates that health education must be included given its major contribution to academic success.

# Health + Education = Academic Success

## Promoting Health as Youth Skills in Classrooms and Life Act (PHYSICAL Act)

### Federal Programs:

#### ***CDC School Health Branch***

- ✓ Funding for CDC's School Health Branch provides a catalyst for collaboration between state education and health agencies to improve the health of children and remove barriers to students' academic success.
- ✓ Coordinated school health programs use a holistic approach by addressing eight key components: health education, physical education, school meals, health services, healthy school environments, staff health promotion, and family/community involvement.



### School Health Education Facts:

- ✓ Decades of research, including the Campaign for Healthy Schools Health in Mind (2012), has unequivocally documented the link between health and fitness and improved academic achievement, grades, graduation rates, cognitive ability, and behavior as well as reduced absenteeism and truancy.
- ✓ The National Standards in Health Education call for 40 hours of instruction in grades K-2 and 80 hours of instruction annually for grades 3-12. Although CDC's 2012 School Health Policies and Practices Study (SHPPS) reports that schools have increased health instruction, there are no data on the quality of such instruction, amount of time devoted, or qualifications of individuals responsible for teaching.
- ✓ Comprehensive health education reduces health-risk behaviors, including preventing smoking, alcohol use, and dating aggression and violence—and improves health-enhancing behaviors such as increasing physical activity and improving dietary behaviors.
- ✓ The lack of physically fit and health-literate graduates has become a national security issue—being overweight or obese has become the leading medical reason why applicants fail to qualify for military service.
- ✓ Subjects that are not considered “core” under the current education law are frequently marginalized and typically eliminated by local school authorities due to a lack of funding or administrative priority, according to the 2012 Shape of the Nation Report: Status of Physical Education in the U.S.A.
- ✓ The IOM report Educating the Student Body: Taking Physical Activity and Physical Education to School, stated that the school environment is key in encouraging and providing opportunities for children and adolescents to be active. Among its recommendations is that physical education be elevated to a core subject.