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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

DATE: WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1, 2015

RE: SCR 108 / SR 60

PERSON TESTIFYING: JOAN LEWIS, VICE PRESIDENT
HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

The Honorable Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Harimoto and Members of the Committee:

The Hawai'i State Teachers Association (HSTA) offers **COMMENTS on SCR 108 / SR 60** requesting the Department of Education to establish weekly minimum standards for time dedicated to physical education in elementary intermediate and middle schools.

HSTA has numerous policy statements that speak to the importance of regular and appropriate exercise for our students throughout their school careers. Through our physical education programs, our kinesthetic learning opportunities and even our roles as coaches for our students help us walk our talk.

This measure, however valuable the intent, once again mandates time for specific activities that schools must somehow work to "make happen". We believe that our schools and the professionals that staff them must make the decisions to maximize the use of their limited resources. This includes the concept that time is a valuable resource.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer **COMMENTS on SCR 108 / SR 60**.

The American Heart Association strongly **SUPPORTS** SCR 108/SR60.

Childhood obesity has more than tripled in the past 30 years, and obese children are at least twice as likely as non-obese children to become obese adults. Fifty-seven percent of adults in Hawaii are overweight or obese, and 1 in 3 children entering kindergarten in Hawaii are overweight or obese. One important way to stop this rise in obesity and chronic disease in our children is by establishing lifelong physical activity habits with strong physical education programs and regular physical activity opportunities throughout the day in our nation's schools.

Children must be physically active at school and learn about keeping healthy through exercise and a balanced diet. Regular physical activity is associated with a healthier, longer life and lower risk of CVD, high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, and some cancers. If the lessons of lifetime physical activity and healthy food and beverage choices are modeled at both school and home, children will have the optimal foundation for healthy living.

Research shows that healthy children learn more effectively and achieve more academically. Unfortunately, many schools are cutting back on traditional physical education programs because of budgetary concerns and competing academic demands. Beyond the impact on chronic disease, physical inactivity and obesity place a significant burden on our society. Overweight and obesity account for approximately \$147 billion in annual health care costs nationally, or 9 percent of all medical spending. An estimated \$470 million is spent annually on obesity-related health problems in Hawaii. Roughly half of those costs may be paid by Medicare and Medicaid, meaning taxpayers absorb the costs for health care associated with obesity treatment.

Obesity and lack of physical fitness in America's youth also affect our national security. Senior former military leaders report that 27% of young Americans are too overweight to serve in the military. Around 15,000 potential recruits fail their physicals every year because they are too heavy.

The American Heart Association strongly advocates for daily, quality physical education in our nation's schools to give children a healthy head start on life.

A GROWING SEDENTARY LIFESTYLE: SERIOUS HEALTH CONSEQUENCES

Unfortunately, even obese pre-schoolers, are showing some of the biomarkers related to cardiovascular risk.

- One study showed that the plaque buildup in the neck arteries of obese children is similar to those levels seen in middle-aged adults.
- Along with rising obesity rates, the rate of prescription drug use by children for diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol is increasing.

- Other research suggests that regular participation in physical education classes helps reduce obesity in low-income teenagers who are disproportionately affected by the childhood obesity epidemic.
- A nationwide survey of school principals showed that kids are more likely to get the recommended amount of recess and physical education if they live in states or school districts with policies that call for more of those types of activity.
- Children's physical activity level drops dramatically between the ages of 9 and 15.

ACTIVE CHILDREN THRIVE ACADEMICALLY AND SOCIALLY

Physically active children are more likely to thrive academically and socially. Through effective physical education, children learn how to incorporate safe and healthy activities into their lives. Physical education is an integral part of developing the “whole” child for success in social settings and the learning environment.

- Evidence suggests that physical activity has a positive impact on cognitive ability, avoiding tobacco use, insomnia, depression, and anxiety. Other studies have shown that physically fit children have higher scholastic achievement, better classroom behavior and less absenteeism than their unfit counterparts.
- Ninety-five percent of parents believe physical education should be part of a school curriculum for all students in grades K-12.

QUANTITY AND QUALITY

- The AHA recommends that children engage in at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity each day. It is reasonable that children should get at least 30 minutes of that time in school.
- The national recommendation for physical education is 150 minutes per week in elementary and 225 minutes per week in middle and high schools.
- The quality of the physical education program is also paramount. A high-quality physical education program taught by a certified physical education teacher enhances the physical, mental, and social/emotional development of all children and helps them understand, improve, and maintain physical well-being.

The AHA advocates for daily, quality physical education in our nation's schools, together with other healthy lifestyle choices. We support policy that would:

- Require a physical education coordinator at the state level to provide resources and offer support to school districts across the state.
- Offer regular professional development opportunities to physical education teachers that are specific to their field.



- Require physical education teachers to be highly qualified and certified.
- Add valid fitness, cognitive, and affective assessments in physical education that are based on student improvement and knowledge gain.
- Require that students be active in moderate vigorous physical activity for at least 50% of physical education class time.
- Assure that physical education programs have appropriate equipment and adequate facilities.
- Not allow students to opt out of physical education to prepare for other classes or standardized tests.
- Not allow waivers or substitutions for physical education.

The AHA urges legislators to support SCR 108/SR60 as a first step toward implementing one of the important cornerstones of what will need to be a comprehensive approach to addressing obesity in our state.

Respectfully submitted,

Donald B. Weisman
Hawaii Government Relations Director

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free of cardiovascular
diseases and stroke."*

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Please remember the American Heart Association in your will.

