

March 27, 2015

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Vice Chairwoman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, and Education
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, and Education
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Cochran, Vice Chairwoman Mikulski, Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

We write to express our strong support for funding in the upcoming appropriations legislation for the Carol M. White Physical Education Program (PEP), a critical source of federal funding to improve physical and nutrition education programming and policies in schools and communities across the country.

PEP provides grants to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and community-based organizations to initiate, expand, or enhance physical education programs, including after-school programs, for students in kindergarten through 12th grade. Funds may be used to provide materials and support to enable students to participate in physical education activities and for training and education for teachers and staff. The purpose of PEP grants is to increase students' appreciation for lifelong healthy habits and to make progress towards meeting state standards for physical education.

Evidence suggests that quality physical education programs are effective and more essential today than ever. Over the past 30 years, childhood obesity has more than doubled in children and quadrupled in adolescents. One-third of children and adolescents in the United States are estimated to be overweight or obese. Regular physical activity is associated with a healthier, longer life and with lower risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, and some cancers. In addition, physically fit children have higher scholastic achievement, better classroom behavior, greater ability to focus, and less absenteeism than their unfit counterparts. Unfortunately, many youth are increasingly sedentary throughout their day, meeting neither physical education nor national physical activity recommendations. In 2013, only 27 percent of adolescents met the federal physical activity guidelines for aerobic physical activity.

PEP grants, which are the only federal spending for physical education, are invaluable in addressing physical education and activity in schools. However, only ten percent of applicants for this program are awarded grants out of the thousands that apply. In FY2015, PEP was funded at \$47 million, a devastating 37% cut in funding compared to the FY2014 funding level of \$75 million. **We respectfully request that you restore funding to at least \$75 million in Fiscal Year 2016 for the Carol M. White Physical Education Program to support comprehensive, integrated physical education programs to increase student fitness, address the serious issue of childhood obesity, and help children develop healthy lifestyles.**

We appreciate your consideration of this request and look forward to working with you during the upcoming discussion on federal appropriations.

Sincerely,