



The Illinois Alliance to Prevent Obesity (IAPO) works to ensure that trends in obesity in Illinois are stable in 2015 and moving downward by 2018 through promotion and adoption of nutrition and physical activity policy and environmental change interventions.

www.preventobesityil.org

Convened by

Illinois Public Health Institute

954 W. Washington Blvd., Ste. 405, MB 10
Chicago, IL 60607

T: (312) 850-IPHI (4744)
F: (312) 850-4040

<http://www.iphionline.org>

September 23, 2015

Governor Bruce Rauner
Office of the Governor
James R. Thompson Center
100 W. Randolph, 16-100
Chicago, IL 60601

Governor Rauner,

We are writing in regards to your recent memo to the General Assembly on budget and reforms. As members of the Illinois Alliance to Prevent Obesity, a statewide coalition of over 140 organizations dedicated to improving health through the reduction of obesity rates in Illinois, we are concerned about your reference to the Large Unit District Association's (LUDA) letter in the section on relieving local schools from unfunded mandates.

We have long been supporters of Illinois' daily physical education requirement because research has shown that physical education is critical to our students' academic achievement, behavior, and health. Your memo states that eliminating unfunded mandates "won't cost us anything," yet, with 1 in 3 Illinois children overweight or obese, and obesity costing Illinois over \$6 billion a year in healthcare costs, we have to disagree.

Physical education (P.E.) is a critical component of students' learning and is distinctly different from physical activity. With recent changes to the Illinois State Learning Standards for Physical Development and Health, P.E. in Illinois has been improving in quality and is focused on helping students learn the skills they need for a lifetime of fitness and health, as well as an understanding of the connection between their fitness and brain function, academic achievement, and behaviors. Eliminating the requirement for P.E. will threaten the health and learning of students across Illinois, especially for students in the most low-resourced schools.

LUDA's letter also implies that a reading teacher is more important than a P.E. teacher, but pitting students' ability to read against their lifelong health is a false bargain. The return on investment of P.E. is high, with improvements in test scores, in-class behaviors, and health. Having less P.E. in Illinois' schools will make our state less competitive as chronic diseases have a profound effect on our economy with employers bearing much of the cost. The importance of P.E. should not be under rated. We are enclosing a research brief that details the research on the beneficial effects of P.E. on learning and student success.

Just as teaching math, science and English are not "unfunded mandates" but essential subjects, we should view P.E. as part of the core curriculum for producing well educated students who can be productive members of society. With strong support for P.E. across the state, and with national partners viewing Illinois' P.E. policy as a model, we urge you to maintain the P.E. requirements to ensure a fit and healthy student body.

Thank you,

Elissa Bassler
Executive Director, Illinois Alliance to Prevent Obesity
CEO, Illinois Public Health Institute
312-850-4744

