



Texas Pediatric Society
The Texas Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics



**Texas Academy
of Family Physicians**

**Senate Education Committee
Testimony on Senate Bill 283
*March 24, 2009***

**Presented by the Texas Medical Association, Texas Pediatric Society and
Texas Academy of Family Physicians**

- Madame Chair and members of the Committee, it is a privilege for me to speak with you today on behalf of the Texas Medical Association, the Texas Pediatric Society and the Texas Academy of Family Physicians, collectively representing more than 48,000 physicians in the state of Texas. My name is Kimberly Avila Edwards. I am an Austin-based pediatrician.
- I am here today in SUPPORT of SB 283 by Sen. Jane Nelson relating to the membership and activities of local school health advisory committees.
- As a pediatrician, I am acutely aware of the state of children's health in Texas and treat children for many of the precursors associated with obesity. In medical school, I would never have thought that as a pediatrician I would need to be well versed in hypertension, hyperlipidemia, and various other "adult" diseases. As a primary care physician, whose role it is to extol the importance of prevention, I highly value opportunities to speak with families about obesity prevention. Many times, children come to my office well past the point of prevention. Instead, I have to treat these children for obesity-related health issues.
- As a mother, I know the importance of providing a healthy environment for children to get physical exercise. Fewer and fewer children are learning to incorporate regular physical activity into their daily routines.
- We've learned over the years that schools inevitably play a role in helping our children stay healthy. Schools and teachers watch over our children for a large amount of their day. Legislative efforts over the past few years — thanks in part to this bill's author, Senator Nelson — have sought to enhance both the nutrition and wellness education of our children, as well as their exposure to routine physical activity.

- School Health Advisory Councils (SHACs) established by Senate Bill 19 in 2001 assist schools in developing policies and implementing programs related to nutrition and physical education/activity. The Councils are comprised by a number of stakeholders including parents, teachers, administrators, health care professionals, and the business community.
- In some instances, parent and community involvement in SHACs has decreased at the hands of school administrators and staff. It is imperative that parents have a stake in the SHAC process by helping formulate recommendations that directly impact their child's environment. Further, they should demand transparency of SHAC recommendations and activities.
- SB 283 seeks to meet these needs through enhancing School Health Advisory Councils by calling for parents to serve as the chair or co-chair of each Council. It also requires that they meet at least four times a year and submit a written report outlining the Council's activities as well as recommendations regarding the school districts health education curriculum.
- As a physician I can tell you that we have an obesity crisis on our hands. As a mother I ask that you enhance the tools available to parents wanting to address this crisis.
- In closing, I thank you for this opportunity to support SB 283 and look forward to this step in ensuring healthier Texas children. I would be more than happy to answer any questions of the committee at this time. Thank you.