

Heart Disease and Stroke. You're the Cure.



American Heart Association | American Stroke Association

Learn and Live.

**Senate Bill 891 by Sen. Nelson
Senate Education Committee
March 26, 2009**

Good morning Chairman Shapiro and members of the Senate Education Committee, my name is _____ and I am here today on behalf of the American Heart Association. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in favor of Senate Bill 891 and thank you Senator Nelson for authoring this legislation.

Our country loves to think of itself as a youthful nation focused on fitness. But behind the vivid images of robust runners, Olympic Dream Teams, and rugged mountain bikers is the troubling reality of a generation of young people that is, in large measure, inactive and increasingly overweight. The consequences of the sedentary lifestyle lived by so many of our young people are grave. A physically inactive population is at increased risk for many chronic diseases, including heart disease, stroke, colon cancer, diabetes, and osteoporosis. In the short run, physical inactivity has contributed to an unprecedented epidemic of childhood obesity that is currently plaguing the United States. The percentage of young people who are overweight has doubled since 1980. Of children aged 5 to 10 who are overweight, 61% have one or more cardiovascular disease factors and 27% have two or more. In Texas, 42% of Texas 4th graders are overweight or obese and our state currently ranks 6th highest in the US for obesity in 10-17 year olds.

According to the *Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent and Decrease Overweight and Obesity*, only half of adolescents regularly participate in vigorous PE and one-fourth report no PE. Regular physical education is important for maintaining a healthy body, enhancing physiological well-being, and preventing premature death. These facts lead to an alarming conclusion – we are raising perhaps the most unhealthy and least active generation of Americans ever. The habits our young people acquire as adolescents are quite often the practices they will continue as adults.

Senate Bill 891 simply establishes a definition of physical education in the Texas Education Code. A quality physical education program is critical and enhances the physical, mental, and social/emotional development of every child and helps them understand, improve, and maintain physical well-being, in addition to the daily curriculum offered by our public schools.

When one looks at Sec. 28.002 of the Education Code relating to Required Curriculum, all that currently exists under subsection C is physical education. By establishing sequential, true cognitive skills through meaningful physical education curriculum, our children will be well versed in lifestyles and behaviors that will enhance their physical fitness and quality of life well into their adult years. Such a meaningful definition will benefit a child's awareness of true PE and impact their health, education, and awareness of organized and fair play.

The American Heart Association appreciates your time and consideration and would appreciate your favorable consideration of this legislation. Members, I am happy to answer any questions you may have.