

Thank you Chairman Shapiro and committee members for all you do for the children of Texas.

My name is Michelle Smith, I am representing the Partnership for a Healthy Texas, but I am wearing several other hats, all of which support putting CSH language into the local campus improvement plan as outlined in SB 892.

As the chair of the Partnership for a Healthy Texas, we support this bill because it will have an impact on obesity. Texas children are overweight, out of shape and are heading toward an unhealthy future. Obesity rates among school-age children continue to climb. While schools are not responsible for this epidemic, they can do much to reverse this trend. The Texas Legislature has made a commitment to the health of our children. Toward that end they have mandated that school districts implement coordinated school health programs (CSHP) in grades K-8. When properly implemented, a coordinated school health program not only improves the health of our children, but can increase academic scores, decrease discipline problems and reduce absenteeism.

Dr. Pat Cooper successfully implemented coordinated school health programs in his school district in McComb, Mississippi, and the results are documented gains in student attendance, test scores and teacher productivity as well as reducing dropout, suspension and expulsion rates. According to Dr. Cooper, "Simply providing access to education will not solve anybody's problems...We must work together to take action for children's nutrition, fitness and overall health, to create healthy, safe, supportive schools where teachers can teach and children can learn."

Currently, I serve on my district school health advisory council, my campus advisory council and I am president of Lamar Middle School PTA. From this perspective I support this bill because it will help local campuses be accountable for what the legislature has already mandated. With the current emphasis on testing, principals often feel pressured to ~~find places~~ to take kids out of PE and Fine arts for tutoring, and in many schools coordinated school health has never been implemented because children's health is not a priority. Making CSH part of the CIP elevates it to the priority status the Texas legislature has already mandated.

And probably my most important job, as a parent of two middle school children, I support this bill because the learning environment we give our children has to be one that supports the whole child. We are not just teaching a brain. Kids who are sick or hunger cannot learn and supporting coordinated school health supports the efforts our schools are making to help children be healthy and make healthy choices.

Please, support SB 892 as a step toward giving our children a better learning environment and healthier lives.

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