

# American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™



## Rhode Island Chapter

March 2, 2016

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Representative Joseph McNamara  
Chairman, House Committee on Health, Education, and Welfare

Dear Representative McNamara,

On the behalf of the Rhode Island Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, I would like to offer my support for 2016 – H 7644, which requires 20 minutes of “free play” recess daily in the public elementary schools of Rhode Island.

In recent years, public schools in Rhode Island have been under increasing pressure to increase academic time in order to improve scores on standardized tests and other objective measures of student achievement. Limited time and resources have forced many to cut or eliminate physical education and recess during the school day. In addition, many high risk children have their recess routinely taken away for behavioral or academic reasons.

Research shows that opportunities for physical activity, including gym and recess, improve academic achievement, focus, and behavior in school. The additional opportunity for physical activity allows for increased blood flow to growing brains, provides a mental reset from academic work, and burns a few calories in the process.

In a consensus statement published in 2013 in *Pediatrics*, the Council on School Health of the American Academy of Pediatrics stated the following: “The American Academy of Pediatrics believes that recess is a crucial and necessary component of a child’s development and, as such, it should not be withheld for punitive or academic reasons.”<sup>1</sup>

Please consider passage of 2016 – H 7644 to help ensure that all Rhode Island Public School children have an opportunity for free play at recess each day.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gregory Fox".

Gregory Fox, MD, FAAP

Chairman, School Health subcommittee, Rhode Island Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics  
Chairman, Obesity subcommittee, Rhode Island Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics

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<sup>1</sup> Council on School Health of the American Academy of Pediatrics. *Pediatrics* Volume 131, Number 1, January 2013