



Maryland
Hospital Association

March 3, 2021

To: The Honorable Anne R. Kaiser, Chair, House Ways & Means Committee

Re: Letter of Support- House Bill 1296 - Public School Students - Daily Physical Activity
(Student Health and Fitness Act)

Dear Chair Kaiser:

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) 60 member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to comment on House Bill 1296.

Physical activity is an important factor in overall health. The benefits of consistent physical activity for children include improved physical health, mental health, and cognitive function. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that physical activity in children improves health of skeletal and muscular systems, eases symptoms associated with anxiety and depression, increases concentration, and reduces risk of developing obesity and other risk factors for type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and more.¹

HB 1296 would put into practice recommendations from the Society of Health and Physical Educators, also known as SHAPE America, which encourages schools to provide 150 minutes per week of instructional physical education for elementary students.² Offering physical education in schools helps ensure students have equitable opportunity for physical activity. Only one in 5 U.S. homes have parks or recreation/fitness centers within a half mile, making it difficult for students in these areas to have space to play and engage in physical activities³

Under our Total Cost of Care Model, the state submitted the State Integrated Health Improvement Strategy in December. It includes goals for three population health domains: diabetes, opioid use disorder, and maternal and child health. HB 1296 aligns with the goal of reducing the mean body mass index in adults. Although children are not included in the metrics for this goal because the data is less reliable, they will be included in intervention strategies. Youth who are physically active can establish healthy habits early and lessen the risk of prediabetes and diabetes, which affect 34% of Marylanders and cost the state \$7 million a year.⁴

For these reasons, we encourage a *favorable* report on HB 1296.

For more information, please contact:
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¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d.). [Physical Activity Guidelines – Schools](#).

² Action for Healthy Kids. (n.d.). [Daily Physical Education](#).

³ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (January 26, 2017). [Physical Activity](#).

⁴ Maryland Health Services Cost Review Commission. (December 14, 2020). "[Statewide Integrated Health Improvement Strategy Proposal](#)".