

MedChi

The Maryland State Medical Society

1211 Cathedral Street
Baltimore, MD 21201-5516
410.539.0871
Fax: 410.547.0915

1.800.492.1056

www.medchi.org

TO: The Honorable Sheila Hixson, Chairman
Members, House Ways & Means Committee
The Honorable Jay Walker

FROM: Joseph A. Schwartz, III
Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
J. Steven Wise

DATE: March 19, 2013

RE: **SUPPORT** – House Bill 855 – *Student Health and Fitness Act*

The Maryland State Medical Society (MedChi), which represents over 7,300 Maryland physicians and their patients, supports House Bill 855.

House Bill 855 requires that all students in kindergarten through grade 5 participate in a specified amount of physical activity. The increasing incidence of childhood obesity and the significant social and health consequences associated with this public health epidemic is appropriately receiving increased attention from health professionals, educators, and public policy makers. A critical component of any successful strategy to combat childhood obesity includes increased physical activity. Given the amount of a child's day that is spent in school, mandatory requirements for physical education are logical, cost-effective and will produce significant benefits in the health and social well-being of students.

The benefits of physical activity are not limited to efforts to help control weight. Physical activity in children provides a wide range of significant health benefits including, but not limited to, increased muscle strength and aerobic endurance, increased bone mass, and prevention and reduction of high blood pressure. Furthermore, there is increased evidence that academic performance and behavior control is enhanced with increased physical activity.

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MedChi applauds the sponsor for his continued leadership on issues regarding childhood obesity, health and physical education. House Bill 855 is a modest and well-justified approach to incorporating the unquestionable benefits of physical activity into the curriculum of our schools. MedChi strongly urges a favorable report.

For more information call:

Joseph A. Schwartz, III
Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
J. Steven Wise
410-244-7000