

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

SESSION

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SENATOR MIA COSTELLO

SPONSOR STATEMENT

Senate Bill 200

“An Act relating to physical activity requirements for students in kindergarten through grade eight.”

Senate Bill 200 amends state law to ensure Alaskan students receive a minimum recommended amount of physical activity at school. Under the bill, school districts would provide at least 90% of the recommended exercise time for adolescents by the U.S. Center for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC). School districts would have the flexibility to meet this requirement, equating to 54 minutes, through physical education classes, recess, or a combination of activity types.

The amount of time students spend in school has grown over the years. Changes to the school day and curriculum have led to less time for students to participate in unstructured physical activity. Lack of exercise can have a detrimental effect on youth, and can cause obesity and other health concerns. This bill aims to ensure Alaskan students in kindergarten through eighth grade are involved in physical activity and have breaks from the classroom that allow youth to destress and improve their focus. Currently, slightly more than half of school districts in Alaska have a written policy for elementary and middle school recess. This bill will set a minimum standard to ensure students receive adequate opportunities for physical activity.

Breaks in the school day have been proven to aid information retention and focus. Unstructured physical activity, like recess, lets students process classroom lessons and allows for an education outside the classroom from their peers. A CDC report reviewed 50 peer-reviewed studies and documented links between physical activity and academic performance, including achievement, behavior, cognitive skills, and attitude. The American Association of Pediatrics has also found that recess, either indoor or outdoor, led to more attentive and productive students, in addition to learning on playgrounds from peers.

Ensuring adequate physical activity will allow Alaska’s students the opportunity to learn from each other, to improve their academic performance, to fight childhood obesity through exercise, and to reduce the stress levels that have adverse effects on our children. This bill helps them grow into successful adults.

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