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Sponsor Statement House Bill 70

“An Act relating to health education and physical activity requirements for students in grades kindergarten through eight; and establishing the Thursday in February immediately following Presidents' Day as PLAAY Day.”

First, House Bill 70 amends state law to require schools to provide 90% of the daily amount of physical activity recommended for children and adolescents in the physical activity guidelines by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) through physical education classes or unstructured physical activity, like recess, or a combination of both. Our state has consistently ranked poorly in education outcomes compared to the rest of our nation. A report by the CDC showed documented links between increased physical activity and improved academic performance.

Currently, the CDC recommends a minimum of 60 minutes per day of physical activity for children. Therefore, this bill requires 90%, or 54 minutes, of that recommended activity occur at school. The bill provides exemptions for students with medical restrictions, for students that receive school credit for participation in athletics or other extracurricular physical activities, and for health and safety reasons like inclement weather.

Additionally, HB 70 establishes the Thursday in February immediately following Presidents' Day as PLAAY Day, which stands for Positive Leadership for Active Alaska Youth. Elementary schools around the state are encouraged to celebrate PLAAY Day by engaging in synchronized physical activity at 10am. As childhood obesity rates have been increasing in recent years PLAAY Day provides a dedicated day and time to emphasize the importance of physical activity and can help generate enthusiasm for and commitment to a lifetime of physical activity.

As we tackle complex issues facing our students in Alaska, this bill provides one avenue through which our state can work toward improving educational outcomes, combatting chronic illness resulting from a lack of physical activity, and build a lifetime of commitment to healthy living.

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