

March 15, 2007

**Senate Education Committee
SB 530/Physical Education**

Good morning Madame Chair and members of the committee:

My name is Katie Reed, and I am the immediate Past President of the Texas Association of School Boards and a member of the Northside ISD Board of Trustees. Northside is one of the fastest growing districts in Texas, we are growing by around 4,000 new students every year, opening at least three new schools every year and will be hiring between 800 and 1,000 new teachers next year. We all applaud the efforts of Senator Jane Nelson and the twenty-three joint authors of Senate Bill 530, and I do in particular since I taught Physical Education in the long ago past. We also recognize the efforts of the American Heart Association, American Cancer Society, the Texas Medical Association, the Texas Pediatric Association, the Texas PTA and other member associations of the "Partnership for a Healthy Texas" who collaborate to improve children's health throughout Texas.

Northside ISD is committed to the health and well-being of our students and has promoted quality physical education, health and nutrition programs since the early 1990's. In 2000, Northside began the implementation of a Coordinated School Health Program called C.A.T.C.H. for grades Kindergarten through fifth. The components of

C.A.T.C. H. (Coordinated Approach to Children's Health) consist of physical education, child nutrition, parent and community involvement, and classroom instruction.

Northside ISD is also a recipient of the Carol M. White Physical Education Program (PEP) Grant, which was designed to restructure secondary physical education. Our program called, "Move to Live, Live to Move" is a curriculum that emphasizes fitness and lifetime activities that improve fitness levels, increase awareness and knowledge of fitness training and motivates students through exposure to a variety of lifetime sports and leisure pursuits.

Impact of SB 530 on Northside ISD

Although we are concerned about childhood obesity and its effect on the health of the 82,000 children in our district, we have serious concerns about certain aspects of this bill.

- At the Middle School level, the required 30 minutes of physical activity per day, or 135 minutes per week that would be mandated, does not provide the flexibility required to schedule the necessary classes for grades 6th – 8.
- In order for Northside to meet the physical activity requirement, students would have to be scheduled into physical education for a full-year in grades 6th – 8th. This action would remove the district's local decision making authority in meeting the requirements of the

overall middle school curriculum. In addition, the physical education classes would increase in size and possibly, additional staff would need to be hired. This would be added to the needs for Math, Science and Special Ed teachers that are in short supply.

- The requirement to fitness test Kindergarten through second grade students is impractical. Although some fitness tests, such as the Fitnessgram, provide certain assessments at this level, it is very difficult with large numbers to test the younger children. Testing at that age is more of a measure of the teacher's ability to motivate children than a true measure of physical fitness.
- The requirement to fitness test all students in grades 9th – 12th is also not practical. The only logical place to conduct physical fitness testing is in physical education class. Under the current graduation requirements, students are only required to take 1 ½ semesters of PE. There are many substitutions and waivers for physical education at the high school level including athletics, band, ROTC, pep squad, off-campus PE, etc.
- According to the language in SB 530, the physical fitness assessment would have to be adopted by the Commissioner of Education. We are currently using a networked version of the Fitnessgram as Northside's assessment tool and if this test was not chosen, it would have a significant financial impact on our

district. Additionally, if a physical fitness assessment was chosen other than the Fitnessgram, Northside would be unable to implement the new program by September 1, 2007 as mandated in the law.

- One of the components of SB 42 (Legislation of 2005) was that Coordinated School Health programs would be in place during the 2006-2007 school year for grades Kindergarten – 8th . As of March 9, 2007, approved programs for the middle school level have not been released, making it almost impossible to implement Coordinated School Health Programs in middle schools this year. The concern is that a situation could occur with the time frames currently listed in SB 530. Having to change goals or programs every two years is very expensive for districts and does not allow us to evaluate the current programs before changing to a new one.
- The State Board of Education passed the new 4 X 4 Rule last November requiring high school students to now take four years of math and science. As a result, we are now moving electives once offered at the high school level down to the middle school level. As we all know, not all students are traditional learners, and for some students, electives are an opportunity to

In closing, I have given you examples of what is happening in my District because that is what I am familiar with. Northside as the largest Recognized District in the State, has been a leader on this front. However, I am sure that other Districts are also moving in this direction and want to make sure their students are also in good physical condition. TASB and Northside ISD appreciate your efforts to combat childhood obesity, and we respectfully ask that you take our concerns into consideration.

Thank you. I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.