

## CHILDREN AT RISK Supports Senate Bill 226 (Nelson)

- **Texas reality:**
  - Texas ranks 32<sup>nd</sup> in overall prevalence of childhood obesity, and 70% of overweight children grow up to become overweight adults.
  - Texas students are not receiving the national recommended level of daily physical activity.
  - In fitness assessments, 75% of middle school children failed all 6 state fitness standards.
  - Rates of obesity were highest among Hispanic boys and African American girls.
- **Cost of obesity in Texas:**
  - Texas spent \$10.5 billion on obesity-related costs in 2001 and cost is projected to increase to \$39 billion by 2040.
  - FITNESSGRAM data provides needed information in order to allocate state resources efficiently and target schools that are most in need.
- **FITNESSGRAM® school assessments provide important information about fitness levels and increased risk of obesity:**
  - By utilizing software to aggregate FITNESSGRAM® data, researchers will be better equipped to target prevention programs to populations that have poor levels of physical fitness and are at a higher risk of obesity.
  - Confidentiality is maintained. School districts can provide results of individual student performance without identifying information such as name, social security number, or date of birth.
  - **SB 226 is not a mandate.** SB 226 allows schools to voluntarily provide student performance information on physical fitness to TEA.

**For Questions or comments please contact:**

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[mkimball@childrenatrisk.org](mailto:mkimball@childrenatrisk.org)



March 21, 2011

The Honorable Florence Shapiro  
P.O. Box 12068  
Capitol Station  
Austin, TX 78711

Dear Senator Shapiro

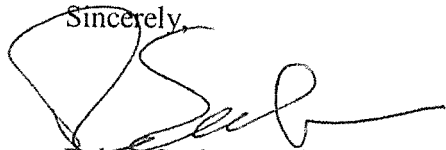
As President and CEO of CHILDREN AT RISK and President of The Hispanic Health Coalition, we are writing to express our support of Senate Bill 224 and Senate Bill 226, by Nelson, and to respectfully request that both bills receive an opportunity for a public hearing. The Hispanic Health Coalition is comprised of leaders from health care, education, social service, and community and government organizations who are committed to improving the health of the Hispanic population. SB 224 establishes a healthy schools recognition program to recognize schools for achievements on Fitnessgram assessments and other health indicators through the implementation of programs that encourage student health and fitness. SB 226 increases the usefulness of Fitnessgram assessment data by requiring school districts to report de-identified, individual student performance results to the Texas Education Agency.

Childhood obesity is a growing epidemic in Texas, with over 40 percent of children in our state being overweight or obese. According to the recent report, *Stuck in the Middle: The False Choice Between Health and Education in Texas Middle Schools* (Kelder, 2010), the Texas Fitnessgram assessment shows that 75 percent of middle school children failed all six state fitness standards, 31 percent failed the body composition (obesity) test, and 43 percent failed the aerobic capacity test. Among the child population in Texas, Hispanic youth are particularly affected with the highest rates of obesity compared to other racial/ethnic groups; this is especially troubling given the fact that nearly 50% of the child population in Texas is Hispanic. The health risks associated with being overweight or obese are of serious concern. Heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, and high blood pressure are just a few of these risks. The economic costs are significant, and with the prevalence of overweight and obesity increasing each year, the annual cost to our state is estimated to reach \$39 billion by the year 2040.

By recognizing schools who are successfully implementing school health and fitness programs, SB 224 will have a direct impact on incentivizing schools to improve the quality of physical education they provide. Instead of relying solely upon aggregate student Fitnessgram data, by requiring schools to report de-identified individual student data to the Texas Education Agency, SB 226 will provide greater transparency in how students are performing. We strongly believe that improving physical fitness education in schools will bring us closer to eliminating childhood overweight and obesity in Texas.

Thank you for your service to our state as a member of the Texas Senate. Please know that your years of hard work and uncompromising support of the interests of Texas' children are appreciated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Sanborn", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Robert Sanborn, Ed.D.  
President & CEO  
CHILDREN AT RISK

*Norma Olvera, Ph.D.*

Norma Olvera, Ph.D.  
President  
Hispanic Health Coalition