

The Virginia Coalition for Fine Arts Education

Position on 2012 HB 1092 Physical Education and Fitness Legislation

The Virginia Coalition for Fine Arts Education, representing over 5,000 music, dance arts, theatre arts, and visual arts teachers, K - higher education, is concerned with HB 1092, which requires the Board to develop program guidelines for physical education in elementary and middle schools. We are concerned with the impact of the legislation on other aspects of student lives. We support the need for physical fitness and agree that childhood obesity in our society must be addressed. We are, however, concerned with the unintended consequences of the legislation.

We believe this legislation could result in an unfunded mandate having long-term financial, facility, equipment and scheduling issues for local school divisions.

We believe students should be offered greater flexibility to participate in a variety of physical fitness activities. We believe flexibility in allowing students to meet the physical education requirement would promote positive lifelong habits and would be less intrusive on student academic options.

We support the requirement to involve interested stakeholders in development of physical education program guidelines.

We are calling your attention to the following issues related to this legislation:

1. While we believe the value of students developing a lifelong enjoyment of physical fitness is important, our hope would be that a broader range of options would assist students in finding ways of maintaining healthy lifestyles they could sustain. A lifelong commitment to exercise and other ways of meeting those human needs is based on individual choice of physical activities.
2. If additional daily minutes of participation in a physical education class are required, school divisions will likely face scheduling issues, a need for additional staff, a need to create new facilities, and a need to purchase additional equipment. The result would be significant financial implications for school divisions at a time when meeting existing needs is challenging.
3. If additional minutes for physical activity are required as part of the existing school day, there will be a direct impact on the ability to meet elementary art and music SOLs. In addition, substantial scheduling difficulties would be created for those classes.
4. When and if additional time requirements for physical activity would become applicable to high schools, the result would be the addition of 2 additional Carnegie units at the high school level. Coupled with the addition of the Economics and Personal Finance course requirement, the result is 3 additional course requirements. These additional units could impinge on the ability of students to prepare for careers, through sequential courses, in preparation for post-secondary study or career pathways, in all advanced elective studies.

Your continued support of fine arts instruction is much appreciated. Offering of fine arts and other electives benefits all students. Thank you for your consideration.

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