



January 22, 2023

Minnesota House Education Policy Committee  
571 State Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Pryor and Members of the House Education Policy Committee:

The Legal Services Advocacy Project (LSAP) appreciates the opportunity to provide written public testimony in support of HF271 which limits withholding recess in schools.

To support healthy learning and living – recess, breaks, and movement are critical for all children. The American Academy of Pediatrics states, “Recess is a necessary break in the day for optimizing a child’s social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development.”<sup>1</sup> Much like healthy school meals, school recess is often credited with encouraging positive social interaction with peers, improving focus in the classroom, and reducing classroom disruptions.

Recess detention is absolutely the wrong tool to use against students who are still growing and striving to meet adult expectations. Students who present with behaviors at school that are seen as necessitating “punishment” are actually in need of support. Many young students don’t yet have access to all the skills needed to respond appropriately in every situation, and often times these unwanted behaviors are attempts to communicate unmet needs.

School boards should be encouraged to develop policies that promote a schoolwide understanding of all the circumstances in which children struggle to meet adult expectations and how staff can be less negative and reactive toward children in these situations.

A thoughtful response from a caring, trusted adult in the building can be far more effective than withholding recess. Taking away a student’s freedom of movement and socializing can build sadness, rage, and despondency among children who may need more movement and more breaks than are currently provided.

Thank you for considering this important step toward ensuring healthy kids and healthy schools.

Sincerely.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J. Webster", is written over a horizontal line.

Jessica L. Webster  
Staff Attorney  
Legal Services Advocacy Project

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<sup>1</sup> See American Academy of Pediatrics Policy Statement, “The Crucial Role of Recess in Schools.” January 1, 2013.  
<https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2012-2993>