Good day. I am Jennifer Sacheck, a professor and physical activity researcher at the Milken Institute School of Public Health at George Washington University. I am the Chair of Exercise and Nutrition Science and also the Sanofi Professor of Prevention and Wellness. Prior to coming to Washington, I was a professor within the School of Nutrition at Tufts University for nearly 13 years where I was the lead researcher on several large-scale studies, including NIH and foundation grants, examining the impact of both physical activity and diet on health outcomes among lower-income, racial/ethnically diverse schoolchildren. In my work in Boston- and New England, I have worked closely with elementary and middle schools to rigorously and objectively measure physical activity among thousands of schoolchildren and to examine activity levels on a variety of health parameters including obesity, cardiometabolic risk, memory, executive function, as well as standardized test scores. In order to adequately promote a variety of health indices, the current 2018 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans recommend that children accrue at least 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity daily, half of which should be accrued during the school day.

My testimony, therefore, is in support of the Healthy Students Amendment Act. As you know, Council unanimously passed the Act last year and it became effective on March 13th, but its implementation is subject to appropriations. I strongly urge the council to fully fund the new law so that D.C. schoolchildren receive additional support for strong physical activity school environments which promote an environment more conducive to children not only learning, but also being active throughout the school day (in addition to resources for quality physical education and daily recess time).

With strong support from D.C. Public Schools, I have continued my evaluation of physical activity among schoolchildren here in D.C. This past year, we objectively measured the school-time physical activity in nearly 700 children across four elementary schools. Measurements were taken across two school days in Pre-K4, 1st, 3rd and 5th graders with a research-grade waist-worn accelerometer. Similar to findings in the Boston-area, our findings are both striking and significant:
Only 28.7% of 1st, 3rd and 5th grade students met the school-time recommendation for 30 minutes of physical activity

- Boys were higher than girls (40% vs. 17%)
  - Boys = 28 minutes vs. Girls = 22 minutes
- Lower grades (1st and 3rd) were higher than older grades (5th) (35% vs. 16%)
  - Lower = 26 minutes vs. Upper = 20 minutes

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Particularly noteworthy is that the recently enacted Healthy Students Amendments Act recommends that pre-K children receive 60 minutes of physical activity within the school day. In our pre-K 4 year-old sample we found that:

- Only 1.6% of Pre-kindergarten students met the 60-min recommendation
  - Boys were higher than girls (1.9% vs. 1.2%)
    - Boys = 29 minutes vs. Girls = 24 min (also significantly different)

These results call attention not only to the need to improve school-time activity, but also to address clear sex disparities in activity levels and the precipitous decline that we see across the elementary school years. Furthermore, the findings among pre-K children are striking – children in this age group are simply not even close to meeting the new guideline. This age group should be our most active children (their activity levels were about the same as 1st graders measured).

Clearly, we need to support enhancing physical activity opportunities for our children throughout the school day to optimize their academic achievement, but also their immediate and long-term health. We and others have demonstrated the link between physical activity and fitness and brain function, but also in the prevention of obesity and related chronic health conditions which often impact student attendance, attention, and “presenteeism.” Children are energized by even short bouts of physical activity and perform better on attention to task after even after a few minutes of movement. Short bouts of in classroom movement can easily be implemented alongside standard curricula and can be led by teachers and/or students. These short activity breaks, in conjunction with adequate physical education and recess opportunities break up extended bouts of sedentary time, which we also know can negatively impact academic learning and overall health. Many of the solutions are easy, low-cost, and sustainable – plus, we are giving children an additional opportunity to be successful, without taking another opportunity away. And it is fun to boot!

Provisions in the Healthy Students Amendments Act will help provide more students with critical physical activity. The provisions include annual professional development for teachers to better incorporate physical activity into their classrooms as well as a corrective action process through OSSE for schools not meeting physical activity and physical education guidelines to improve. Council should fund the new law, or absent full funding work to implement those portions that do not have a fiscal impact.