

## Floor Debate

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### Full Formal Session

03/11/2010 1:00 PM Senate Chamber

- Richard T. Moore, (Democrat); Worcester & Norfolk ([Hide Debate](#))

This is a very important bill for this term because of an increase in juvenile diabetes, childhood obesity and a lack of fitness among our children. We need to step-in early in establishing standards for competitive standards. This allows the department of public health to work with the school departments as to what food is available to them at school. It also is to make children more aware of what they're eating. It's also about a healthier lifestyle. We're concerned about the decline in physical fitness. What can we do in school and outside of school to make people more active. It's also about looking at local farming as a way to acquire better and more nutritious food which will be both to the benefit of our kids and to our local farms. We need to look not only at snacks but at what we're actually serving students. It's a comprehensive bill.

Richard R. Tisei, (Republican); Middlesex & Essex

Question: I noticed in the summary of this bill it amends chapter 69 in law to require fitness programs in the schools. Requiring local schools to do things that have been eliminated from budget cuts. Will this be an unfunded mandate that we're requiring the cities and towns to pay for?

Richard T. Moore:

The terms in the summary may come across a bit strong; it's not an unfunded mandate; but what it is, is a responsibility to keep our students healthy. That's part of learning. This is not some new, onerous requirement were asking to make this part of our daily living and learning. I don't think it's too heavy a financial burden by any means.

Also, I want to commend the chair of the public health committee for her work on this issue when she has other health needs facing her to ensure this gets adopted. Its an approach to a balanced and healthy lifestyle.

- Susan C. Fargo, (Democrat); 3rd Middlesex ([Hide Debate](#))

This is a serious public health issue. Public health deals with the maintenance of public health and this goes a long way. In the past 20 years, our obesity rate has more than doubled, developing serious and costly health issues. This generation of kids is looking at being the first to have a diminished life span compared to their parents. 98% of 5-17 year olds are in school, which is why school food has to be healthy. In 1964 when Congress enacted the school lunch act, it was considered a national safety issue, as this is now.

- Thomas M. McGee, (Democrat); 3rd Essex & Middlesex ([Hide Debate](#))

Increasing physical activity is the most important way to achieve less obesity. 23 % of deaths are connected

to sedentary lifestyles. Enrollment in physical programs has dropped by 20 %. It's recommended that children engage in at least 60 minutes of physical activity a day. 150 minutes a week in elementary school. 250 minutes a week in high school , that's not happening. Although Massachusetts has required physical activities, less than 57% of the state's public schools still require physical fitness. A key piece of staying healthy is physical activity. Food is important, but physical activity is key. 350,000 people in this country die from being overweight each year in this country. It influences self-esteem and better cognitive skills as well. This amendment demands better information on access to physical education in our state's school as a first step in re creating physical activities starting in kindergarten.