

Press Release

For Immediate Release

CROWLEY, DROMM, PHYS ED 4 ALL COALITION COMMEND CITY COUNCIL PASSING MEANINGFUL PE LEGISLATION

CITY HALL (October 29, 2015) – The New York City Council today unanimously passed legislation introduced by City Council Member Elizabeth Crowley to further ensure public school students are receiving the state-mandated physical education they are entitled to.

Physical education (PE) has faded out of many city schools over the past few years, despite state-mandated requirements to hold classes and report on doing so. Year after year, New York City schools are falling short of providing students with the required amount of PE instruction; studies show schools with a lack of gym space, licensed PE teachers and more.

This legislation (Int. 0644-B) will require the Department of Education (DOE) to report the number of minutes and frequency of physical education at each grade level, the number of full-time and part-time certified instructors at each school and report information on the on-site and off-site spaces used for instruction. The DOE would submit this data to the City Council Speaker and post on its website, allowing parents and others to monitor how much PE is given at their children's school. The first report will be released by August 31, 2016 and will reflect the conditions for this school year.

"Comprehensive, quality PE during the school day has been shown to improve children's health, focus and academic performance. This bill is about fairness; by knowing which schools are falling short, we can provide resources to help them meet the State's standards." **Crowley** said. "Currently, the DOE does not report on whether schools comply with the minimum standards for physical education. As a public school parent, I was frustrated when my son's school substituted gym class with test prep; and sadly, I have heard worse stories from parents – their children are without a PE teacher, class space or simply just the time for physical education."

Studies done by City Comptroller Scott Stringer and members of the Phys Ed 4 All Coalition revealed hundreds of thousands of children in the New York City school system are without quality physical education, and 60 percent of schools citywide only offer PE one to two times a week.

"All young people deserve a robust physical education taught by licensed professionals in a gymnasium or other large space suitable for physical activity," said **Council Member Daniel Dromm**, Int. 0644-B co-prime sponsor and Chair of the Education Committee. "For too long, our city has failed to meet the basic physical education needs of our public school students thereby violating state education law. I am committed to working with Council Member Elizabeth Crowley and my colleagues in the Council to ensure that public school students are provided with the physical education they need to live happy, healthy lives."

"Physical education is essential to a child's physical health and academic achievement," said co-prime sponsor **Council Member Helen Rosenthal**. "Parents regularly complain that their child doesn't get PE, because schools are either overcrowded or co-located and there's no space. This bill will expose what's really happening in the schools. Every child must receive the physical education she needs."

"Physical education is an important part of a complete curriculum for our children. Failing to provide adequate time for physical education in our schools can negatively impact health and education outcomes and costs our students the opportunity to build healthy, life-long habits around exercise from an early age," said **Council Member Stephen** Levin, co-prime sponsor. "This bill will give us a better picture of the state of physical education in New York City and help to ensure that every child gets the PE time they need and deserve."

“Physical education improves physical fitness and academic performance, and combats serious health problems. The New York City Department of Education’s failure to provide sufficient PE misses an opportunity to improve children’s health and success, particularly in low-income communities of color, where asthma and obesity rates are highest,” said **Erin George**, Health Justice Community Organizer, New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (NYLPI). “NYLPI thanks Councilmembers Crowley and Dromm for their advocacy on this issue. We hope that passage of this bill will spur the City to improve physical education and reduce health and educational disparities.”

"My son, Fernando, is a second grader at one of the most overcrowded schools in the city, P.S. 19, in Corona, Queens" said **Rafaela Vivaldo** of Make The Road New York. "Students only have gym for 30 minutes each week and sometimes they watch movies instead. My son spends his school day in a trailer: without access to play, he's less able to learn, and he's less happy. My child's health and success is as important as any other and the health of all of our children depends on adequate physical education in school."

“The positive shift to a more comprehensive Physical Education approach transforms the foundations of Physical Education. Teachers trained in the new curricula deeply instill in students the tools for lifelong fitness, body awareness, anxiety management, nutrition, and sustained healthy living,” said **Brian Semonian**, PE teacher and Founder of Phys Ed Plus. “Thank you to Councilmembers Crowley and Dromm for championing this PE reporting bill. Passage of Int. 644 is an important first step in ensuring a future NYC community that is healthy, happy and productive.

“Quality physical education should be a guarantee for every child in New York City,” said **Yuki Courtland**, Chair of the American Heart Association Advocacy Committee. “Parents deserve to know exactly how, when and where their children are being taught PE. Thanks to Council Members Crowley, Dromm, our long list of bill sponsors and our partners in the Phys Ed for All coalition, New York City is poised to take a strong step forward toward improving physical education for every student. However, our job isn’t done yet. The American Heart Association looks forward to the many ways this new DOE report will serve to improve the quality of PE for all schools.”

“Physical education not only helps reduce the number of children who are obese, but also helps these students lead longer healthier and happier lives with a decreased risk of obesity related diseases such as cancer. This new law will help ensure New York City school students are getting the physical education programming they need and deserve. ACS CAN looks forward to working with New York’s leaders in government and education to further address this crucial issue,” said **Michael Davoli**, Director, New York Metro Government Relations, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN)

“This bill is an important step towards ensuring that all NYC children have access to, at a minimum, the number of hours of physical education required by state law. Physical education is critical to the health and wellness of children. The publicly reported data will ensure that legislators, advocates, communities, teachers and parents are all aware of where schools are succeeding and where we need to target our efforts. A very big thank you to Council Members Crowley and Dromm and Comptroller Stringer for being staunch champions of this bill and the need to increase PE4All!” said **Stephanie Gendell**, Associate Executive Director, Citizens’ Committee for Children

“It has been well-documented that physical education improves academic achievement. Therefore, to foster academic achievement without building physical fitness is an exercise in futility. The Women’s City Club of New York applauds this bill as an essential step in ensuring accountability for the health and well-being of students in the public schools,” said **Jacqueline Ebanks**, Executive Director, Women’s City Club of New York.

“As Bronx County continues to rank last in health outcomes in New York State, Bronx Health REACH applauds Councilmembers Crowley and Dromm’s advocacy on Int. 644 and encourages the Council to pass this important bill, which will make information about the NYC DOE’s PE programs more broadly accessible. Adequate PE is critical if children are to build skills necessary for the development of lifelong habits that promote health and reduce disease. With the information being requested, Bronx Health

REACH would be able to provide more targeted support and technical assistance to schools in meeting PE requirements.” said **Kelly Moltzen**, Program Manager, Bronx Health REACH

“Quality Physical Education will always be vital to children’s physical development, health, and the development of positive attitudes toward physical activity. I thank our City Council members for moving forward with Int. 644. This is certainly a positive step toward realizing Physical Education for ALL NYC schoolchildren and a positive contribution to our children’s health. It is my hope that this progress will not stop until each NYC child who attends school receives the mandated number of minutes per week of quality, progressive Physical Education, taught by a NYS certified Physical Education teacher, in a space designated for Physical Education. The children are our future, and, it has been said before, it takes just one child to lead a country!” said **Dr. Michael Gosset**, President-Elect, NYC Zone of New York State Association of Health, Phys. Ed., Recreation, and Dance

“The importance of physical fitness on a child's development is undeniable, which is why Wellness in the Schools supports the passage of Int. 644 and its goals. At Wellness in the Schools our motto is 'let kids play', because we know that the best way to get fit is to have fun,” said **Wendy Siskin**, Coach for Kids Director, Wellness in the Schools.

“On behalf of the NYS AHPERD, I would like to thank to NYC parents, advocates and community members as well as Councilmembers Crowley & Dromm and Comptroller Stringer for their effective work and actions that have led to the passage of Intro 644, PE Reporting Bill. It is a big step in the right direction to provide the necessary PE instruction and time to NYC children who need it the most. We expect further improvements in elementary PE including the full compliance with the State regulations and eventual creation of the NYC Certificate for urban elementary PE teachers,” said **Srecko Mavrek**, President of New York City Zone of the NYS AHPERD.

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