



April 7, 2023

Hon. Josh Newman  
California State Senate  
Suite 6520  
State Capitol  
1021 O Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814-4900

Dear Senator Newman,

We are writing to express our support for SB 291, your bill which would create a mandatory recess policy in California. Eat. Learn. Play. and KABOOM! are non-profits focused on creating playspace equity across the country, especially in communities that lack access to engaging, high-quality playspaces due to historical disinvestment stemming from racially discriminatory policies. We also focus on eliminating the other barriers children face to leading physically active lives, like easy access to affordable nutritional foods and the higher academic achievements resulting from being able to lead a healthier lifestyle. Our joint work has allowed us to partner in the city of Oakland to provide nutritional, recreational, and academic support for Oakland students.

Eat. Learn. Play. has made a significant impact in a relatively short time. In the less than four-years since its launch in July 2019, the Foundation has raised and invested over \$38 million, provided over 25 million meals to Oakland children and families during the pandemic, funded over 2,000 classroom literacy related projects across 89 Oakland schools, revitalized seven school and community playspaces, and is now working alongside KABOOM! in a joint effort to rebuild a half-dozen schoolyards this year. KABOOM! has existed for over a quarter century and has built over 17,000 playspaces across the country. Our playspaces have served almost 12 million kids and engaged over 1.5 million volunteers. In addition, KABOOM! has recently launched a national campaign, the 25 in 5 Initiative to End Playspace Inequity, to work with macro partners to address playspace inequity at a systems level. Already, cities like Baltimore, Akron, Uvalde, St. Paul, and Anaheim have agreed to join this effort, with more on the way.

Creating play infrastructure is an important component of any effort to maximize the benefits children receive from physical activity, which include higher self-confidence, lower levels of stress, and better cardiac fitness. However, localities must also have additional policies in place that make play accessible. One such policy includes mandating recess for schoolchildren. Recess has been shown to help children lower their stress levels, curb classroom disruptions, help improve academic performance, and foster better peer interactions. Depriving students of recess to curb disruptive behaviors has been shown to be ineffective and are often applied in a racially disproportionate manner with Black students often suffering more severe punishments than their white peers.

SB 291 would make it possible for every child to engage in at least 30-minutes of recess each school day. It further mandates that recess be outside, weather permitting. This type of activity will result in healthier students who are better prepared to meet the emotional challenges school will present. It will also help children reach their 60 minutes of daily physical activity goal, as prescribed by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Because schoolyard playgrounds are often the safest spaces for many children to play in, including as much time for physical activity within the school day is critical to helping them achieve their recommended physical activity goals.

The pandemic has demonstrated that children need every tool available to help them deal with the feelings of isolation and insecurity many experienced during the public health lockdowns. In 2021, the Surgeon General issued a public health advisory, *Protecting Youth Mental Health*, which specifically identified playgrounds as something communities should invest in to help children better cope with their mental health challenges.

Thank you for sponsoring this critically needed bill. If you would like to discuss playspace inequity in California and what Eat. Learn. Play. and KABOOM! are doing to address it, we would be happy to do so with you.

Sincerely,



Chris Helfrich  
CEO of Eat. Learn. Play.



Lysa Ratliff  
CEO of KABOOM!