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## For Immediate Release

### Parent Group Urges Lawmakers to Add More Recess to the School Day

*Proposed bill would mandate at least forty minutes of play time per day for elementary students*

LITTLE ROCK, AR — On Thursday, February 7, Representative Jana Della Rosa (R - Rogers) filed House Bill 1409, which would ensure that all elementary school students receive at least forty minutes of recess per day. In November, a group called Parents for Active Learning asked the House and Senate Education Committees to address the current lack of recess time, noting that most elementary school students in Arkansas public schools receive only about eighteen minutes of play time per day.

“Any parent of young kids knows that they need to burn off some energy on the playground in order to focus and behave in class, and the research shows that recess improves their health, academic performance, behavior, and social development,” stated Ali Noland, who says she joined Parents for Active Learning after discovering that her five-year-old was expected to sit through six hours of class each day with less than twenty minutes of recess time.

Several other states, including Florida, New Jersey, Georgia, Virginia, Missouri, Arizona, Connecticut, Indiana, and Rhode Island, have recently passed legislation aimed at protecting or extending recess. Legislation is often necessary to address the problem because recess gets inadvertently squeezed out by other legally-mandated requirements. In Arkansas, the six-hour daily instructional time requirement prevents public schools from offering more recess without first obtaining a waiver of state law. A pilot program, passed last session, implemented extended recess in approximately twenty-five schools across the state. Now parents are urging lawmakers to do the same for all schools.

Parents aren't the only ones pushing for more recess; students have also been asking lawmakers for the change. At a recent Joint Education Committee meeting, lawmakers were presented with letters written by second-graders attending Gibbs Elementary in Little Rock. The students said that more recess time would make them healthier and better behaved, and they explained that they currently feel rushed during lunch and recess.

“More recess and lunch time would make us less wild during the rest of the day so everybody would learn more. We would also get in less trouble,” said seven-year-old Izzy Kopsky, who testified before the Education Committee on November 19. “More recess and lunch time would also give us a brain break so we can work harder in our classes.”

Both the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend that young students get at least an hour of unstructured play time each day. Licensed Clinical Social Worker Veronica McClane, a founding member of Parents for Active Learning, explained that “recess meets several developmental needs at once, allowing children to form healthy lifestyle habits while simultaneously practicing the social skills they will need as adults.” Arkansas currently ranks seventh in the nation for childhood obesity, and Representative Della Rosa's bill would require that recess include “opportunities for free play and vigorous physical activity.”