

Sophia Tyutyunnyk  
Orono Middle School, Orono, Maine  
LD 156

Senators, representatives, and members of the committee, my name is Sophia Tyutyunnyk of Orono, Maine, and I am here to support LD 156: An Act to Require Outdoor Recess Time for Students from Grade 6 to Grade 8.

My school day at Orono Middle School is six hours long. Often, my classmates and I don't even take a step outside. Everything we do is sitting in the classroom, doing work. The only free time middle school students have is during lunch and advisory. Lunch is always in the cafeteria, and in advisory, the majority of the students sit on their phones. There is one golden time of the school year when the weather is warm, and our teachers have the option to take us outside. Nevertheless, not all advisory classes do go outside, because it is the teacher's decision, and not all advisors prefer to go outdoors.

Outdoor recess would be very beneficial to kids in grades 6-8. There are not only physical health benefits to outdoor recess, but there are cognitive, social, and mental advantages as well. Kids in middle school need to have outdoor recess.

The American Academy of Pediatrics states that children need at least 60 minutes of physical activity per day. These 60 minutes not only help children combat obesity, but they also engage motor skills and movement. Having a 20-minute outdoor recess guarantees that children are at least getting one-third of the recommended minimum of physical activity they need in order to be healthy. There are also the benefits of fresh air, like an increase in vitamin D levels and a better functioning immune system.

What about the educational benefits? According to the CDC, outdoor recess improves memory and focus, and combats disruptive behavior in the classroom. Another report done by the CDC says that there is a positive correlation between recess and academic performance: "There is substantial evidence that physical activity can help improve academic achievement, including grades and standardized test scores." Research suggests that pressure on schools to perform well on standardized tests led to a decrease in recess, but in reality, having outdoor recess will make a teacher's job easier, and a student's results improve.

We cannot forget about the social aspect of recess. Since this age is so digital, teens now are lacking social skills. Recess is a perfect time for students to practice socializing with their friends and peers. During outdoor recess, children learn to communicate, negotiate, cooperate, and have self-control, which are all life-long skills. It is also good for a child's mental health to take a break in the middle of the day and to relax.

Maine could also look for guidance from states such as Missouri, Florida, New Jersey, and Rhode Island, who all already have adopted a 20-minute outdoor recess mandate.

Let's help Maine's middle school kids live healthier, smarter, and happier lives.

Thank you for listening to my testimony. I really appreciate your consideration of this important matter.