**ADVOCATE TEMPLATE LETTER TO:**

**Governor, State Commissioner of Education, Department of Education, Superintendent, School District Leaders, Principal**

Dear **XXXX**:

On behalf of **NAME OF ORGANIZATION/AFFILIATION**, I ask that as the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) is implemented and education priorities for **STATE** are announced to school districts, that physical education and health are included. **NAME OF ORGANIZATION/AFFILIATION** remains ready and willing to provide expertise and guidance related to school health and physical education for the students of **STATE/SCHOOL DISTRICT**.

Our members, along with a coalition of over 100 like-minded organizations, fought for eight years to have health and physical education recognized as critical components of a student’s education. We are thrilled that Congress elevated both health and physical education in ESSA by including them as part of a student’s well-rounded education. This is an important designation for these two subjects that were left out of *No Child Left Behind*, the legislation’s previous authorization.

As part of a well-rounded education, health and physical education programs can now be supported by funding allocated to states for Title I, Title II and Title IV - Student Support and Academic Enrichment Block Grants and the 21st Century Community Learning Center program.

After the passage of *No Child Left Behind* 15 years ago, we witnessed two alarming and most likely related trends. Health and physical education were too often considered ancillary subjects and therefore the first to be cut in state education budget shortfalls. In addition, child obesity rates reached epidemic proportions, with one in three children ages 10-17 either overweight or obese. This rise in the rate of childhood obesity in our nation contributes to an estimated $270 billion per year in healthcare costs.

Research has shown that participating in physical activity and physical education improves student attendance, test scores, participation and enthusiasm for other academic subjects, motivation to learn, and reduces discipline referrals. Evidence also shows that effective school health education reduces student participation in behaviors such as smoking, heavy drinking, school misbehavior, and violence.

Educators that specialize in health and physical education deliver instruction that meets our existing state and professional standards, focuses on a specific course of study and incorporates student assessments and measureable outcomes. Health and physical education programs provide students with a foundation for a lifetime of health, wellness, and character development.

Now that health and physical education have been prioritized in ESSA as part of a student’s well-rounded education and are allowable uses of federal education funding, we believe it’s vital that our organization be engaged as **STATE/SCHOOL DISTRICT** begins implementing plans and priorities for the next school year.

My colleagues and I stand ready to provide you with any resources and guidance you may need and look forward to working with you on behalf of **STATE/SCHOOL DISTRICT’s** children.

Sincerely,