

# Education Committee

## JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No:** SB-222 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

AN ACT PERMITTING INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETICS TO BE USED AS CREDIT TOWARD THE PHYSICAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENT FOR

**Title:** PURPOSES OF HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION.

**Vote Date:** 3/18/2026

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute

**PH Date:** 2/23/2026

**File No.:**

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### SPONSORS OF BILL:

Education Committee

### REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill would allow for students to use their participation in interscholastic athletics to count as credit towards the physical education graduation requirement. The reason for this bill is to reduce repetition for students who already engage in strict physical activity through sports, making traditional physical education classes redundant for student athletes as well as give them more time to focus on academics, rest, and mental health.

### SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE (IF APPLICABLE):

The substitute eliminates the requirement to award physical education credit for sports participation and instead allows the exemption described above.

### RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Charlene Tucker, Commissioner, Connecticut State Department of Education

In this testimony, the commissioner opposes S.B. 222 because they argue that interscholastic athletics cannot substitute for required physical education (PE) credit for high school graduation. The Department emphasizes that PE is an academic subject, guided by the State Board of Education's Healthy and Balanced Living Curriculum Framework and CDC standards. These standards are designed to build physically literate students with lifelong knowledge, skills, and habits for health, wellness, and fitness. Unlike athletics, PE is sequential, standards-based, and provides a comprehensive curriculum covering motor skills, cognitive development,

stress management, body composition, injury prevention, adaptive activities, and holistic student growth. The testimony highlights that interscholastic athletic programs provide only sport-specific skills and tactics, which do not address broader wellness knowledge or ensure equitable learning for all students, (including those with disabilities). Finally, The Department of Education notes that graduation credit must reflect measurable learning outcomes that every student can access, whereas athletics' selective and competitive nature cannot guarantee this standard.

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

### Allison Chen, Student, Hall High School

The testimony supports the bill, arguing that interscholastic athletics should count toward physical education graduation requirements. Speaking on their experience as a high school volleyball captain and student-athlete, the author describes the significant time commitment and physical demands of a typical sports season. This emphasizes that student athletes already meet or even exceed physical expectations. The author states that allowing athletics to substitute for physical education would reduce duplication and give student-athletes more time to focus on academics, rest, and mental health. This student addresses equity concerns by arguing that the bill does not limit access to physical education but rather recognizes different pathways that students can take toward health and wellness. She suggests that equity should involve expanding athletic opportunities rather than restricting flexibility for those already participating.

### Gene Mickelson

In this testimony, the author writes about his experience having opportunity to participate in morning prayer meetings in high school for about 30 minutes. The author states that the school also offered a room for the students wishing to participate and a time frame that did not disturb the normal school schedule.

### Evelyn Schwartz, Student, Windsor High School

This testimony supports S.B. 222 because the student author argues that high-achieving student-athletes already engage in rigorous physical activity through sports, making traditional PE classes redundant. The author, a three-season athlete and class salutatorian, explains that mandatory gym time limits their ability to take advanced courses like AP and ECE classes. This testimony emphasizes that athletic participation demonstrates effort, dedication, and skill, which parallels the grading criteria in PE. Allowing sports to count toward PE credit could encourage more student involvement, build teams, and strengthen the school's athletic community. The testimony concludes that students should have the flexibility to use their time in ways that align with their interests and academic goals, rather than repeating activities they are already committed to.

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

Anonymous 45, Anonymous 45, Physical Education Teacher

Anonymous, Anonymous

Brain Chandler, Physical Education Teacher, South Windsor Public Schools

Kevin Doherty, Health & Physical Wellness Teacher, East Hampton Schools

Kelly Holtz, Health & Physical Education Teacher

Jorge Limeres, Health & Physical Education Teacher, South Windsor High School

Joanne Martin, Health & PE Teacher, South Windsor Public Schools

Brenden McClay, Health & Physical Education Teacher

James Warnock, Physical Education Teacher

These testimonies, submitted by several Connecticut Health & Physical Education teacher and coaches, express serious opposition to S.B. 222. These testimonies emphasize that athletics and physical education are fundamentally different and should not be treated as interchangeable. These testimonies stress that physical education is a required academic subject grounded in state and national standards, with structured curriculum, intentional instruction, and formal assessment of student learning and growth. Whereas, student team athletics focuses on sport-specific skills and competition, and does not provide the same comprehensive, standards-based education. These teachers and coaches raise student accountability concerns, noting that students leave teams mid-season for various reasons. This makes it unclear how participation would translate into academic credit or who would verify all the learning outcomes. These testimonies also stress equity issues, explaining that physical education is inclusive and universal, while athletics is selective and can be limited by tryouts, transportation, scheduling, or financial barriers. Additionally, they point out that coaching certification differs significantly from teaching certification, particularly in areas such as curriculum development, differentiation, and assessment. The authors argue that allowing athletics to substitute for physical education would create inconsistent pathways to graduation and undermine academic integrity. It also notes that physical education is designed to support all learners, including students with disabilities, in ways that school based athletic programs are not structured to guarantee. For these reasons, they have urged the Education Committee to oppose S.B. 222 and preserve physical education as an equitable, rigorous requirement for all students.

Anonymous 53, Anonymous 53

The testimony argues that allowing interscholastic sports to replace physical education credit would be inconsistent and harmful, as physical education courses teach broad, lifelong skills beyond a single sport. It emphasizes that PE helps all students—especially non-athletes—develop a positive relationship with physical activity, while also supporting academic readiness through structured movement. The author notes that even student-athletes value and choose physical education classes.

Amanda Amtmanis, CTAHPERD

The testimony argues that while students may pursue personal interests like reading for pleasure or participating in sports, these activities alone cannot replace the structured learning provided in core classes. Physical education provides critical knowledge and lifelong skills that athletics do not cover. It emphasizes that PE helps students develop the ability to maintain physical, mental, and social health beyond their school years.

Fred Balsamo, Executive Director, CT Association of Athletic Directors

The author believes that substituting team sports for physical education classes is unwise because of the curriculum's depth vs. sport-specific skill, the lifelong fitness, lifesaving, and recreation skill taught in class, the certified teaching and assessment missed in team sport practice, the safe space courses build for students trying new physical skills, and the risk of injury / credit loss.

Sarah Benes, Associate Professor, Southern Connecticut State University

The testimony expresses opposition to S.B. 222 due to its potential negative impact on high school students. The author states that physical education is a research-based, academic discipline taught by trained educators. By allowing athletics to substitute for physical education courses, this legislation would undermine the educational value of those classes. The testimony emphasizes that physical education provides critical knowledge, skills, and dispositions that support lifelong physical activity and overall well-being. Citing SHAPE America's position, the author relays that physical education is part of a well-rounded education under federal law, while athletics is not standards-based or academic in nature. Additionally, the testimony raises equity concerns by giving some students a "shortcut" to graduation requirements based on access to athletics.

Leslie Blatteau, President, New Haven Federation of Teachers Local 933

The testimony states that current law already allows physical education credit for certain athletic participation, making the bill unnecessary. The author argues that physical education includes standards and learning outcomes that cannot be replicated through team sports alone. The author also mentions that coaches (who are often stipend-based and not always certified teachers) serve a different and more limited role than a physical education teacher would. Concerns are raised about how credit would be determined for injured students, those who leave teams early, and whether coaches would be responsible for grading. This testimony also warns that allowing these substitutions could negatively impact the inclusivity and diversity of ability levels found in physical education classes.

Michael Bullock, Physical Education & Health Teacher, South Windsor High School

The testimony is emphasizing that athletics and physical education serve different purposes. The author argues that physical education is a standards-based academic subject with

instruction, assessment, and a focus on lifelong health and fitness skills. However, athletics centers on sport-specific competition. The testimony raises concerns about accountability (noting that students often leave teams mid-season and that athletic programs are not designed to measure or verify academic learning for credit). The author also states that physical education is inclusive and required for all students, whereas athletics is selective and limited by tryouts and resources. Additionally, the author also points out that coaches are not certified educators.

Len Corto, Executive Director, Connecticut High School Coaches Association

The testimony states that interscholastic athletics cannot replace the academic rigor of physical education. The author emphasizes that physical education is a state-mandated, standards-based course designed to teach comprehensive wellness and fitness literacy, and lifelong health skills. The testimony also says that school athletics differs by primarily focusing on competition and sport-specific performance. The author discusses equity concerns, noting that physical education is inclusive of all students, whereas athletics are selective and limited to those who make teams. The testimony also points out that sports participation does not guarantee consistent or sufficient physical activity, as practices and games often involve periods of low engagement.

Cathi Dallesander, Physical Education Teacher, Windsor Locks Public School

The testimony explains that PE focuses on lifelong health skills such as fitness planning, stress management, and recreational activities designed for all people, not just athletes. The testimony distinguishes between physical activity and physical education, noting that athletics and other activities do not provide the same structured, curriculum-based learning. This testimony also raises concerns about equity, pointing out that the bill could disadvantage students who do not participate in sports, including those with disabilities or limited access to athletics.

Lisa Daly, Department Supervisor, West Hartford Public Schools

The testimony raises concerns that while the proposal may appear to offer flexibility or cost relief, it would create significant equity issues across Connecticut schools. The author explains that the benefits of the policy would not be shared equally. They note that only a minority of students participate in athletics statewide, and disparities also exist by gender and potentially by race. It also emphasizes that physical education is one of the few inclusive spaces that brings all students together, while athletics is inherently selective.

Corey Freer, Art Teacher, Portland Middle School

The testimony opposes S.B. 222 while also sharing support for athletics and their positive impact on students. The author states that, based on his experience, athletics and physical education serve different purposes and should not be treated as interchangeable. This testimony emphasizes that extracurricular activities, including sports, music, and other unified arts programs, are extensions of classroom learning and not substitutes for standards-based, assessed curriculum taught during the school day. The testimony raises concerns about equity,

pointing out that not all students can participate in extracurriculars due to ability or outside obligations, and that graduation requirements should remain consistent for all. The author warns that the bill would blur the line between academics and extracurriculars, creating issues with accountability and academic integrity.

Glen Lungarini, Executive Director, CAS-CIAC

The testimony, submitted by the Connecticut Association of Schools–Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference (CAS-CIAC), opposes S.B. 222 while affirming the strong educational value of interscholastic athletics. It states that the CIAC has developed a comprehensive, education-based athletics curriculum focused on leadership, social-emotional learning, and lifelong wellness, positioning interscholastic team sports as an extension of the classroom. However, the organization argues that the bill, as written, creates legal and structural concerns. Specifically, it notes that most coaches are not certified physical education teachers, and awarding academic credit without proper certification may conflict with existing state laws that govern teacher qualifications. The testimony emphasizes that physical education courses are designed to deliver comprehensive, standard-based instruction and assessment that athletics alone do not provide. It also points out that districts already have flexible options to integrate athletics into credit-bearing experiences when aligned with certification requirements. CAS-CIAC warns that the bill could create legal uncertainty for districts and undermine established academic standards.

Douglas Marchetti, Athletic Director, Norwalk High School

The testimony, submitted by a veteran physical education and health teacher and athletic director, opposes S.B. 222 based on their decades of experience in education and athletics. This testimony argues that physical education provides unique and structured learning experiences as well as inclusive social interactions that cannot be replicated through sports participation alone. The author shows concern that allowing athletics to replace PE would cause students, and student athletes, to miss out on valuable courses that build skills and inclusive peer engagement. The testimony also raises equity concerns, noting that school-based programs provide access to opportunities that many students could not afford outside of school. Additionally, there are questions around the feasibility of implementation, including how credit, grading, and assessments would be managed. He warns that the bill could diminish the role of physical education teachers and potentially lead to job losses.

Matthew Martin, Professor, Central Connecticut State University

The testimony mentions that while athletics provide important benefits, they are not equivalent to physical education. The author explains that physical education is designed to expose students to a wide range of movement activities that promote lifelong health and confidence beyond school. Allowing students to waive PE would limit opportunities to develop broader skills and experiences. The testimony also discusses the unique social environment of physical education, where students interact with peers from diverse backgrounds and abilities, fostering important social skills. Additionally, it notes that regular participation in physical education supports mental health, reduces stress, and can improve academic performance.

Kelsey Maxwell, Past-President, CTAHPERD

The testimony, submitted by a K–12 Arts and Wellness Curriculum Specialist and former physical education teacher and student-athlete, opposes S.B. 222. This testimony argues that athletics and physical education are fundamentally different; interscholastic team sports focus on sport-specific skills while physical education is a standards-based academic subject centered on lifelong fitness, personal goal-setting, and overall wellness. The testimony highlights that modern physical education programs are intentionally designed to develop movement competency and sustainable health habits that extend beyond school, which athletics alone cannot provide. Additionally, the author points out that coaches are not typically trained or certified to deliver standards-based instruction or assess academic learning. The testimony also raises equity concerns, warning that allowing athletics to substitute for PE would create unequal pathways to graduation.

Gary Morin, Chairperson, Health & Movement Studies, SCSU

In this testimony, the author is arguing that while interscholastic athletics provide short-term physical activity, they do not support students' long-term health and wellness needs. The author states that many high school sports are not lifelong activities, making it essential for students to be exposed to a broader range of movement experiences through physical education. The testimony also underlines the importance of physical education in addressing public health concerns, like obesity, by equipping students with knowledge and habits for sustained physical activity. It argues that athletics alone cannot provide this comprehensive exposure.

Kristen Mullady, HS Physical Education Teacher, East Hartford High School

This testimony, opposing S.B. 222, states that athletics and physical education are distinct and should not be treated as interchangeable. The author then argues that physical education is a standards-based academic subject that provides structured instruction in fitness, health, and lifelong wellness, while athletics focus on sport-specific performance and competition. The author highlights their concerns about declining student physical activity and increasing sedentary behavior, stressing the importance of maintaining required physical education to address these trends. The testimony discusses equity concerns, explaining that physical education is inclusive of all students, while athletics are selective and dependent on access and resources. Additionally, the author points out that coaches are not necessarily trained as educators in curriculum and assessment. The author also stresses the role of physical education in supporting students' mental health, social development, and overall well-being.

E. Jane Palmer, K-12 HPE Curriculum Coordinator, Fairfield Public Schools

This testimony by the Coordinator of Physical Education and Health for Fairfield Public Schools, opposes S.B. 222, stating that athletics and physical education serve different purposes. The author argues that PE is a standards-based academic course providing cognitive, social-emotional, and lifelong fitness benefits for all students, while athletics are selective and sport-specific. The testimony raises concerns about accountability, equity, and certification, noting

that athletic participation cannot replace structured, inclusive PE instruction. The author urges the committee to preserve PE as a required, rigorous, and equitable part of the curriculum.

Michelle Rawcliffe, Education Consultant

The author of this testimony opposes the bill because it combines physical activity with physical education, which are fundamentally different. The author also states that physical educators are trained to deliver inclusive, evidence-based instruction aligned with state and national standards, whereas coaches focus on sport-specific skill development and do not provide academic assessment. Allowing athletic participation to substitute for PE credit would create inequities, reduce access for students with disabilities or other barriers, and undermine structured, standards-based learning. The testimony concludes that athletics and physical education are complementary but not interchangeable.

Tracy Stefano, K-12 Supervisor of Health & Physical Ed, East Hartford Public Schools

This author is in opposition because it would allow participation in interscholastic athletics to substitute for required physical education, which she argues are fundamentally different experiences. As a K–12 Health & PE supervisor and professional leader in the field, she emphasizes that physical education is a standards-based academic subject with defined learning outcomes, while athletics is optional, selective, and performance-focused. The author also points out accountability issues, including how credit would be tracked if students quit teams' mid-season, and that many coaches are not certified educators equipped to assess academic outcomes.

Christopher E. Trombly, Ph.D, Dean, College of Education, SCSU

The author opposes the proposal to allow interscholastic athletics to count in place of physical education credits, arguing that PE is a structured, academic subject with a comprehensive, standards-based curriculum that athletics cannot replicate. The testimony also states that PE provides inclusive, diverse learning experiences that athletics do not guarantee. The author maintains that graduation requirements should reflect measurable learning outcomes that all students can equally achieve, which interscholastic sports do not provide.

Ed Manfredi, Executive Director, CTAHPERD

The testimony states that this bill would weaken access to high-quality, standards-based physical education (PE) by allowing substitutions or waivers. The author writes that PE is a vital academic subject that supports students' physical, social, emotional, and lifelong wellness, and provides inclusive, equitable learning opportunities that athletics cannot replicate. The author states that interscholastic sports are not accessible to all students and would create inequities if used as a substitute for PE, benefiting only those with the resources or ability to participate. Ultimately, the testimony urges lawmakers to reject the bill and preserve guaranteed access to comprehensive, certified PE instruction for all students.

**The following 13 pieces of testimony also expressed opposition for SB No. 222:**

Mike Forget, Teacher

Lisa Galske, Physical Educator, Bristol Public Schools

Ryan Gray, Physical Educator & Coach, Hartford Public Schools

Leigha Knapp, Physical Education Teacher, East Hartford Public Schools

Michael Laughlin, Associate Professor, Southern Connecticut State University

Christopher Lawson, Physical Education Teacher, East Hartford Public Schools

Anthony Loomis, Health & PE Department Leader

Karen Lutkus, Family & Consumer Sciences Teacher, Connecticut

Danielle McCauley, Educator, Pomperaug High School

Oppose SB No. 222, Wallingford Public Schools

Doug Rohner

Neil Shilansky, West Hartford Resident

Karen Stowe, Curriculum Facilitator of Health & Physical Wellness, CREC

**GENERAL COMMENTS:**

Kate Dias, President, Connecticut Education Association

Joslyn DeLancey, Vice President, Connecticut Education Association

These testimonies, submitted by the Connecticut Education Association (CEA), argues that existing law already grants flexibility for physical education credit through alternative activities. It explains that this policy allows student-designed independent studies aligned with state standards, ensuring that any credit awarded will stay consistent with physical education and wellness curriculum requirements. The CEA emphasizes that this existing framework provides the flexibility the bill seeks while maintaining oversight by certified educators.

Fran Rabinowitz, Executive Director, CAPSS

The Connecticut Association of Public-School Superintendents (CAPSS) opposes S.B. 222 because it would allow interscholastic athletics to count for physical education credit without specifying who determines whether students meet the requirements for that credit. CAPSS states that academic credit must be grounded in standards-based instruction, assessment, and evaluation conducted by certified educators, yet most coaches are not certified teachers and don't observe or assess students in a way that aligns with PE standards. This lack of clarity could create inconsistencies across districts, raise equity concerns, and undermine Connecticut's long-standing commitment to professional educator preparation and academic rigor. The association also notes that other co-curricular activities, like debate or theater, can only count for credit when aligned to curriculum standards and assessed by certified staff, highlighting the risk of unequal application if athletics are treated differently.

Willie Medina, Board of Education Member, Bridgeport Board of Education

This testimony urges the committee to fix Connecticut’s ECS education funding formula, arguing it has failed to keep up with inflation and lacks a cost-of-living adjustment, leaving districts like Bridgeport underfunded. It emphasizes that students cannot succeed without adequate resources and that fair funding is a matter of justice, not just policy. While acknowledging proposed education bills, the author contends they would be less necessary if the core funding issue were addressed. He calls on lawmakers to take meaningful action to ensure all children, regardless of location, have an equal opportunity to succeed.

Jessica King

This testimony supports increasing the ECS foundation amount to reflect inflation and address inequities in school funding. It talks about how underfunding disproportionately affects high-need students—especially multilingual learners—by limiting access to essential support services and creating unequal learning conditions based on zip code. The author also opposes increased charter school funding, arguing it diverts resources from traditional public schools that serve the highest-need populations. This testimony calls for a more equitable and accountable funding system to ensure all students receive a high-quality education regardless of where they live.

**Reported by: ReAnna Jean Adams**

**Date: 4/8/26**