

My name is Kelsie Droppa. I am a parent of two school-aged children at Wilkins School in Amherst. I am writing in strong support of the proposed bill to add an additional recess period to the school day. As both a parent and a community member, I see firsthand how critical unstructured outdoor time is for children's physical health, mental well-being, and academic success.

Our children are being asked to sit still, focus, and perform academically for longer periods than ever before. At the same time, opportunities for movement, play, and time outdoors have steadily decreased. This imbalance is not developmentally appropriate, and it shows. When my children have adequate time outside during the school day, they come home calmer, happier, and better able to talk about what they learned. On days when recess is shortened or missed, they are more restless, frustrated, and emotionally drained.

This is not just anecdotal, it is well supported by research. Studies from the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention consistently show that regular recess improves attention, behavior, and classroom performance. Children return from recess more focused and ready to learn. Extra recess is not "lost instructional time"; it is an investment that makes instructional time more effective.

Recess is also essential for physical health. Childhood obesity, anxiety, and depression are rising at alarming rates. Schools play a crucial role in addressing these issues, especially for children who may not have safe or consistent access to outdoor play after school. An additional recess provides meaningful daily physical activity, supports motor development, and helps establish lifelong healthy habits.

Equally important are the social and emotional benefits. Recess is where children learn how to cooperate, resolve conflicts, build friendships, and practice independence. These skills cannot be taught through worksheets or screens. They are learned through play. For my own children, recess has been where they've learned resilience, confidence, and how to navigate social challenges. Skills that directly impact their success in and out of the classroom.

We entrust schools with our children for the majority of their day. They deserve an environment that supports their whole development, not just test scores, but their bodies, minds, and emotional well-being. Adding an extra recess period is a practical step that benefits students, teachers, and the learning environment as a whole.

As a parent of two children who are directly affected by these policies, I urge you to support this bill. Our kids need more time to move, play, breathe fresh air, and simply be kids. The evidence is clear, and the benefits are lasting.

Thank you for your time and for considering the well-being of our children.

Respectfully,

Kelsie & Daniel Droppa