



## **Testimony in Support of the TMSA Campaign's Budget Proposal**

February 21, 2013

Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Services

Jesse Kennedy

Oregon Student Nurses Association Vice-President

Co-Chairs Bates and Nathanson, and members of the committee: Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement Campaign's budget proposal.

My name is Jesse Kennedy. I am a student nurse in the nursing program at Lane Community College, Vice-President of the Oregon Student Nurses Association, and a father of two young children.

I'm testifying today on behalf of the Oregon Nurses Association (ONA). ONA is Oregon's oldest and largest nursing union and professional association, and is proud to represent over 13,000 registered nurses, advanced practice nurses, and nursing students in Oregon.

ONA is part of the TMSA Campaign because nurses understand the value and importance of tobacco prevention and cessation. As a nursing student and a father, I understand that children who develop healthy lifestyles and habits at a young age are far more likely to lead healthy lives as adults. Physical education at school is an important way to promote healthy behavior in our children and helps reduce the incidence of chronic illnesses among youth. In conjunction with school-based health centers, physical education can play an important role in helping to create a well-rounded, healthy environment for young Oregonians at school.

As a child, I was overweight. I attended private elementary school in Junction City. My mother and step-father worked there so we could afford for me to attend, and I could get a good start on my education. Although I received wonderful academic training, my schedule lacked regular physical activity. While more time studying and less time being active was good for my test scores, it was horrible for my health. When I transferred to Oaklea Middle School for seventh grade, I realized that I was not as healthy as the other children. Although my parents and teachers said I was "husky," my peers at school called me the "fat kid." It hurt.

Despite how slow and easily tired I was, once I started PE classes in school, I quickly learned that I loved playing football, basketball and soccer. In addition to becoming more physically fit, team games instilled a sense of competition and camaraderie that the rest of my childhood had been sorely lacking. I began to thrive on team sports and working together. It was because of my participation in middle school PE classes that I learned how to work as part of a team. My ability to work with a team has been crucial in my development into adulthood. As a nurse, as a student and as a board member, teamwork is essential.

In 2007, the Oregon State Legislature recognized the important role PE can play in ensuring Oregon's students receive a well-rounded educational experience. At that time, they asked Oregon elementary and middle schools to ensure each student had a physical education in school by 2017. Our schools and our children need your help to ensure that this plan comes to fruition. Schools need money to implement PE programs. Investing \$30 million dollars of the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement funds in physical education programs across the state will help fulfill the original intent of the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement and will help ensure young Oregonians are developing habit that will help shape them into healthy and productive adults, and will help them avoid chronic illness and unhealthy behaviors like smoking.

Please support the TMSA Campaign's proposal and invest \$30 million of the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement dollars in physical education for Oregon's students.

Thank you.