

Sample Email for Postural Screening Bill Call to Action

Dear Representative _____,

My name is _____ and I am your constituent from _____ City/Town of Residence here. I am also a school nurse and work at _____
_____. (Introduce yourself a little)

I am writing to you in regards to House Bill 2335, the Postural Screening Bill. It is currently in the House Ways & Means (HWM) committee for the informal session. I am asking you to contact the Chair of the HWM committee, Representative Aaron Michlewitz, or the Speaker of the House, Representative Ronald Mariano, and ask them to move the bill out of the HWM committee and onto the Senate for a vote.

This bill would reduce the number of times that a student is screened for scoliosis in school from 5 times during grades 5-9 down to once during that same time frame. The law that provides for this required screening (Massachusetts General Law Part 1, Title 12, Chapter 71, Section 57) was created over 40 years ago during a time when many students did not have health insurance and regular health care. At that time it was needed. Today, most students have a medical home, health insurance and are screened annually by a primary care provider.

The screening in school requires students to remove their clothing and be examined by either a school nurse or physical education teacher. This can be damaging for a student's emotional well-being, and because of the negative impact many parents opt out of the screening (up to 60% opt out as reported by school nurses). However, even with opt outs, this screening consumes a significant amount of school health services hours that could be better focused on identifying and addressing mental health and substance abuse issues for students. During a time when we have significant workforce concerns relative to a school nursing shortage, decreasing the time spent on postural screening empowers our school nurses to engage students on more relevant issues and concerns, better supporting their intellectual, emotional, physical and mental wellbeing.

In addition, I support this legislation to reduce postural screening frequency in schools because:

- Routine postural screening is not recommended by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force and only 7 states (including Massachusetts) require postural screening by law,
- Critical time on learning is lost over 5 grades,
- Primary Care Pediatric Providers perform postural screening as part of the physical exam,
- School Nurse time is better used for other screenings, such as the universal SBIRT substance use screening in two grades as required by the 2016 STEP Act, and

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- 93-97% of MSNO members polled in December 2018 (42% of all members, 365 school nurses) support filing this postural screening legislation.