

TO: Professor Kealy
FROM: David Gately
DATE: May 13, 2012
RE: Legislative History Project, M.G.L. c. 111 § 222

For the legislative history project, I chose to research a recent statute mandating head injury safety training programs in schools. The purpose of this statute is to improve the recognition and treatment of head injuries in high school athletes. The training program is mandatory for a variety of employees and volunteers at all Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association schools. The full heading of the statute is “§ 222. Interscholastic athletic head injury safety training program; written authorization required for participation in extracurricular athletic activity following unconsciousness or diagnosis of concussion; maintenance of records showing compliance with section; liability.”¹ This statute, which became effective on January 14, 2011, began as a bill first referred to the Joint Committee of Public Health on January 20, 2009. The committee held a hearing on the initial bill on September 15, 2009.

My first step in gathering legislative history on this statute was to look it up on the Massachusetts Legislature website to familiarize myself with the statute as enacted. Next, I searched it on Westlaw and found all the previous versions of the bill. Finally, I contacted a staff member at the Joint Committee on Public Health explaining my project and requesting any available documents relating to the statute. This proved to be tremendously helpful, as I then received previous bill numbers, testimony, a bill summary, the hearing date, and a few great tips for finding more information on the Massachusetts Legislature website and the State House News website.

For each previous bill number (there were three), I looked at the Bill History dates on the Massachusetts Legislature website to figure out the dates in which action had been taken on each

¹ M.G.L. c. 111 § 222.

bill. I then searched those dates in the House and Senate Journals which are available on the Massachusetts Legislature website. This allowed me to find all the instances in which these bills were mentioned in the Journals.

After exhausting the Massachusetts Legislature website as a resource, I moved on to the State House News website and again searched by each bill number and looked up the specific dates in which actions were taken. Through these searches, I was able to find several reports in which the bills were mentioned.

Luckily, I received invaluable advice and information from the committee staff member I contacted. Without this help, the project would have been much more difficult.