

Massachusetts Prevent Injuries NOW! Network

S. 796
Support

September 15, 2009

Senator Susan Fargo
Representative Jeff Sanchez
Joint Committee on Public Health
State House
Boston, MA 02133

RE: Senate Bill 796

Dear Senator Fargo and Representative Sanchez:

As Chairman of the Massachusetts Prevent Injuries Now! Network (MassPINN), a CDC-funded coalition of more than 50 public health and public safety organizations devoted to reducing the amount and severity of injuries in the Commonwealth, I am writing in support of Senate Bill 796, introduced by Senator Steven Baddour.

Senate Bill 796, An Act relating to safety regulations for school athletic programs, is designed to codify many of the initiatives and activities currently undertaken by MassPINN and its partners in an effort to prevent, recognize and appropriately treat sports-related concussion injuries. The bill is based on a Texas law enacted in 2008 and is designed to protect children and help parents and coaches make informed decisions.

Last winter, The Massachusetts Prevent Injuries Now! Network officially entered into a partnership with Mass General Hospital, the state's chapter of the Academy of Pediatrics, and the Sports Legacy Institute, to begin aggressive promotion of the CDC's "heads up" youth sports concussion prevention materials. These partnerships were based on the recommendations of the Department of Public Health Traumatic Brain Injuries Task Force report in 2007. The Task Force report recommended strategies for addressing the growing problem of TBI in the state and specifically recommended forging new partnerships to prevent sports-related brain injuries among youth. This partnership represents the implementation of this prevention strategy.

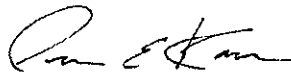
The CDC recently updated their estimate of sports and recreation concussion in the United States from 300,000 to between 1.6 and 3.8 million. The jump represents a new understanding that concussions are rarely reported to medical professionals because of a lack of understanding about the significance of a mild traumatic brain injury. For those that are diagnosed, MDPH's Injury Surveillance data indicates that sports and recreation-related traumatic brain injuries result in nearly 1,400 emergency department visits each year among high school age youth (ages 15-18). Another 1,305 children aged 9-14 are taken to emergency rooms with sports or recreation-related TBIs. In addition, another 99 children between the ages of 9 and 18 suffered brain injuries severe enough to require hospitalization.

Proper concussion diagnosis and management is key to preventing negative outcomes. Return to play during the 'window of vulnerability' after a concussion - where a secondary injury can exacerbate the first - often prevents student-athletes from achieving in school and can cause sudden death from second-impact syndrome.

Getting concussion diagnosis and management to the appropriate communities is a critical prevention strategy. In an effort to do this, MassPINN has been the umbrella organization distributing the CDC's "Heads Up" prevention kits. With the help of our partners the informative kits have been distributed to more than 1,000 Emergency Room directors, trauma prevention directors, youth coaches and school nurses in our Commonwealth. Via MGH, we have signed up such institutions as Children's Hospital, Boston; the Lahey Clinic and Tufts Medical Center; our DPH school nurses are heading efforts to get to the schools, and the Sports Legacy Institute, under the leadership of ex-Harvard football and World Wrestling Federation star Chris Nowinski (author of the seminal book "Head Games").

Senate Bill 796 is a needed step that will institutionalize the importance of protecting our youth athletes and ensure that parents, coaches, schools, and our medical professionals have tools to help them make informed decisions and prevent and treat sports-related concussions.

Sincerely,



Sean Kane
Chairman MASS PINN