



Senate Education Committee

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BILL SUMMARY

Senate Bill 200, Printer's No. 333

Prime Sponsor: Browne

A. SYNOPSIS:

Senate Bill 200 establishes standards for the management of concussions and traumatic brain injuries to student athletes involved in interscholastic sporting competitions or other athletic events. The bill requires the Departments of Health and Education to distribute information about concussions and head injuries to students, parents and coaches. The bill also requires coaches to remove athletes from the field of play if the athlete exhibits symptoms of a concussion or traumatic brain injury.

B. BILL ANALYSIS:

Senate Bill 200, or the "Safety in Youth Sports Act," would affect all students who attend a public school, school district, nonpublic school or private school in this Commonwealth that has elected to participate in the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association (PIAA). The sponsors of youth athletic activities not specifically addressed by this bill are encouraged to follow the guidance set forth in the bill.

The bill requires the Department of Health and the Department of Education to utilize existing materials developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to develop and post on their Internet websites guidelines and other materials to educate student-athletes, parents and coaches about the nature and risk of concussion and traumatic brain injury that may occur while participating in an athletic activity.

Athletic activities include interscholastic athletic competitions sanctioned by the PIAA; an athletic contest or competition that is sponsored by or associated with a school entity, including cheerleading, club-sponsored sports activities and sports activities sponsored by school-affiliated organizations; school-sponsored noncompetitive cheerleading; and all practices for those activities.

A school may hold an informational meeting prior to the start of each athletic season to discuss concussions and other head injuries and the importance of proper concussion management. The student-athlete and their parent or guardian shall be required to sign and return to the school an acknowledgment of receipt and review of a concussion and traumatic brain injury informational sheet developed by the Departments.

A student who, as determined by a game official, coach from the student's team, certified athletic trainer, licensed physician, licensed physical therapist or other official designated by the student's school exhibits signs or symptoms of a concussion or traumatic brain injury while participating in an athletic activity shall be removed by the coach from participation at that time. The student shall not return to participation until the student is evaluated and cleared for return to participation in writing by an appropriate medical professional who is trained in the evaluation and management of concussions, including a licensed physician, certified athletic trainer or licensed psychologist with training in neuropsychology.

A coach shall be required once annually to complete the concussion management certification training course offered by the CDC, the National Federation of State High School Associations or another provider approved by the Department of Health. A coach shall not be eligible to coach an athletic activity until they complete the training course.

The governing body of each school shall establish the following minimum penalties for a coach who refuses to remove a student-athlete with a concussion from the field of play:

1. For a first violation, suspension from coaching any athletic activity for the remainder of the season.
2. For a second violation, suspension from coaching any athletic activity for the remainder of the season and for the next season.
3. For a third violation, permanent suspension from coaching any athletic activity.

These penalties shall take effect two years following the effective date of the bill. The bill shall take effect in 60 days.

Nothing in the bill shall be construed to abridge or limit any rights provided under a collective bargaining agreement or any rights provided under the act of July 23, 1970 (P.L.563, No.195), known as the Public Employee Relations Act. In addition, nothing in the bill shall be construed to create, establish, expand, reduce, contract or eliminate any civil liability on the part of any school entity or school employee.

C. SUMMARY OF RELEVANT EXISTING LAW:

The bill adds a new section to the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L. 30, No. 14), known as the Public School Code of 1949.