

Subject: FW: SB0721

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Subject: SB0721  
Date: May 21, 2013 10:01:08 AM PDT  
To: "rep.brucehanna@state.or.us" <rep.brucehanna@state.or.us>,  
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I you today as I have some problems with this legislation.

First, how far does “nonschool athletic team” extend? I work with the local youth soccer association that deals with kids from ages 5 to 18 and has about 80 volunteer coaches each season. Based on how loosely this is defined, children playing in the youth soccer league are now on a nonschool athletic team. Does this mean all youth sports organizations in the state now fall under the rules of this bill? Little league groups, soccer groups, peewee football, local YMCA’s and so on would all now have to provide trainings and what not on this?

It says the league is responsible for ensuring that all referees and coaches receive annual training on this. Many of these youth sports organizations run their own leagues. I don’t know that these types of youth sports organizations are all setup to provide the training as required. It is my experience that coaches do not attend regular preseason informational meetings so getting them all to attend a mandatory concussion training will be difficult if not impossible and will inhibit the league’s ability to operate and provide suitable programming for their participants.

These youth sports groups have a hard enough time recruiting coaches and volunteers without placing additional burdens of responsibility on these folks. People won’t want to volunteer because they could now be potentially liable if they didn’t notice concussion signs in a child. These people are not medical professionals, and especially in a small town like ours, don’t necessarily come equipped with the intellect to be able to fulfill these sorts of requirements. I think this will have both a negative programmatic and financial impact on these organizations.

This same youth soccer association uses youth referees for its recreational league. Kids as young as 9 are referees. You cannot expect a child to be able to enact the provisions of this bill, but there is no age referenced under the “referee” definition. A 9 year old has a hard enough time grasping the concepts of the rules of the sport. How are they supposed to be qualified to know signs of a concussion? Without the youth referees the league would not function.

I am a member of the adult referee association that is responsible for the youth competitive league and all of the high schools in our area. Our numbers have dropped from over 40 less than 10 years ago to about 15 referees today. Recruitment and retention are difficult with all the guff referees take from fans, coaches, and players. Currently our mandate is if a player has a significant blow to the head they are to be removed and can only return after the coach deems them fit. Now you shift the burden also to officials. Additional liabilities like this will only make recruitment and retention even harder. It will also lead to conflicts on the field with coaches if they feel that their player is fine to play and the referee says they are not. No referee wants more conflict with their job.

It states that the league governing body must develop information, disperse the information, and receive a receipt acknowledgement for providing this information. Many of these nonprofit groups are not setup for these kinds of tasks. They are run by volunteers who are just there because they love the

activity the organization is sponsoring. I think you are opening up a lot of honest, caring, hardworking people to liabilities because many will not even know they have this duty to perform.

As for the clauses on participation, it does not define when the blows to the head or body have taken place or been observed beyond saying that it is within the "same day." What if the kid fell off their bike earlier in the day and hit their head and exhibited signs? A coach or referee will not necessarily have this information. Mom and dad may still bring little Johnny to his afternoon soccer game and if Johnny has problems later how does that affect the coach or referee? It needs to be defined that if the coach or referee observes the blow to the head or body and then there are signs exhibited that the player no longer play that day. The coach or referee cannot be responsible for things that don't happen in their presence.

From a school district perspective, this will be costly on the administrative side in terms of time with having to ensure that we have dispersed the league information and track that we have the receipt acknowledgment from the player and/or parent. We have nearly 600 student athletes at all levels throughout the year. If this new clerical requirement takes just two minutes of time per athlete that is 20 hours of additional work our secretaries will have to do that they currently do not do. Our secretarial staff is very light in some buildings, sometimes just one person, and they are more than busy enough with their current duties and really don't have the time to take on another clerical task such as this.

I'll assume the league will provide us the information and we won't be responsible for creating it. I would imagine that we will probably incur costs for copying the information for disbursement. There will be some additional training costs for club coaches. I would say all of this, between administrative time, trainings, and materials, would cost us \$5,000-7,000 per year. Just one more unfunded mandate coming down the pipe.

All in all this is asking nonmedical citizens to now be able to make diagnosis. While I agree with the safety of athletes in competitions, I do not agree with trying to make John Doe responsible for diagnosing a child. Too much room for error by someone who is not a trained medical professional. Find a way to legislate safety if you must, but get the burden off of Average Joe and leave it to the medical professionals.

Thank you for your time and for your service to our area.

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