



**Renee Spence, Executive Director**  
9 Trotters Ridge Court, Catonsville, MD. 21228  
410-925-2183  
[pssamed@gmail.com](mailto:pssamed@gmail.com)

**BILL:** House Bill 29  
**TITLE:** Education – Participants in Youth Sports Programs – Concussions – Penalties for Coaches  
**DATE:** January 28, 2016  
**POSITION:** OPPOSE  
**COMMITTEE:** Ways and Means  
**CONTACT:** Renee McGuirk Spence, Executive Director, PSSAM  
Email: [pssamed@gmail.com](mailto:pssamed@gmail.com); Cell: 410-925-2183

House Bill 29 requires the State Board of Education to establish specified penalties for a violation of specified provisions of the law relating to concussions and head injuries; requires a local board of education to suspend a coach who violates specified provisions of law relating to the removal from play of a student who is suspected of sustaining a concussion or other head injury in a practice or game and the return to play of the student; and provides the opportunity for a coach to appeal the decision of the county board to the State Board.

PSSAM appreciates the intent of House Bill 29 and the sponsors' concern for the safety and well-being of our student athletes. However, we respectfully oppose this bill. Local school superintendents fully recognize that a concussion is a serious injury and that proper reporting, diagnosis, and treatment are crucial. The well-being of student athletes is a top priority for all local school system athletic programs. It is important to note that much has been accomplished in the past several years on this very important issue.

The Maryland State Board of Education, in conjunction with the Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association (MPSSAA) and the State Concussion Advisory Committee, has established very clear, comprehensive guidelines and procedures regarding concussions and concussion management. MPSSAA is made up of 199 public high schools from each of the 24 school systems, with almost 119,000 student-athletes participating in 24 sports.

The regulations went into effect in May 2013. The regulations include the following new requirements: Coaches must complete biennial refresher concussion training; physical education teachers are required to complete concussion training; local school systems must implement policies for student athletes who have sustained a suspected concussion to ensure appropriate academic accommodations; documented notification to parents; and timely notification to athletic directors and school nurses. In addition, school systems must identify health care providers authorized to return student athletes to play after a suspected concussion has occurred; and MSDE, in collaboration with an appropriate medical, academic, and athletic advisory team, will identify collision, contact, and non-contact sports and recommend limitations of contact athletic exposures to reduce concussion risk. These procedures are reviewed every year and are based on the latest national research. MPSSAA and local school system procedures mirror those established by other states. All school systems follow these guidelines and have specific due-process and appeals processes in place.

It is also noteworthy that in 2014, MPSSAA, representing Maryland's 24 local school systems with 199 high school football programs, became the first state high school athletic association to endorse USA Football's Heads Up Football program. USA Football is the sport's national governing body, leading the game's development for youth, high school and other amateur players. The Heads Up program is a comprehensive approach that compliments current MPSSAA protocols for making a better and safer game. USA Football's High School Coach Certification Course packages the latest information on concussion education, heat and hydration, proper equipment fitting and tackling techniques.

Finally, local schools systems, working with MPSSA, are already in compliance with pages 2 and 3 of HB 29. Athletic coaches in Maryland public schools are not tenured positions and are not subject to the same due-process procedures as those in tenured positions. Superintendents already can suspend coaches in the manner described in the proposed legislation. In this regard, it almost appears as though HB 29 could lead to protection for coaches who violate school system policies and regulations.

PSSAM believes that the current Maryland law related to concussions is resulting in the due diligence and strong accountability that was the intent of the law. We do not see any benefit to creating another law when local school systems strictly adhere to the provisions of the current law.

For the reasons stated above, PSSAM respectfully **OPPOSES** House Bill 29 and urges an unfavorable committee report.