

**BILL:** Senate Bill 840  
**TITLE:** Youth Sports Programs – Concussion Risk and Management Training – Requirements  
**DATE:** February 28, 2018  
**POSITION:** OPPOSE  
**COMMITTEE:** Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee  
**CONTACT:** John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), representing all of the state's local boards of education, opposes Senate Bill 840.

MABE supported the state law enacted in 2011 to establish a statewide system of standards, training, and public awareness in order to protect Maryland's student athletes from head injuries and concussions. MABE believes the current law imposes an appropriate burden on local school systems to train school system staff and to provide information to youth sports programs using school property. MABE opposes Senate Bill 840 because of the duty it would impose on school systems to make available the school system's training program to all outside groups using school facilities and property.

Local school systems are responsible for assuring that each coach within the school system is trained in concussion risk and management. At a minimum, the coach's training must include: the nature of the risk of a brain injury; the risk of not reporting a brain injury; and criteria for removal and return to play. The Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association (MPSSAA) had developed a comprehensive set of informational and training materials for student athletes, parents, and coaches. MPSSAA emphasizes the extensive resources provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The law requires that before a public school student may participate in an authorized interscholastic athletic activity, the county board must provide a concussion and head injury information sheet to the student and a parent or guardian of the student. In addition, the student and the parent or guardian of the student must sign a statement acknowledging receipt of the information sheet.

In this context, MABE is opposed to the conversion of the concussion awareness program to a program to "educate" not only school personnel but also parents and others on each of the following: the nature and risk of a concussion or head injury, the criteria for removal and return to play, the risks of not reporting injury and continuing to play, and appropriate academic accommodations.

Importantly, the law is already quite clear that a student or youth athlete who is suspected of sustaining a concussion or other head injury in a practice or game must be removed from play. Once removed from play, a student or youth athlete may not return to play until he or she has obtained written clearance from a licensed health care professional trained in the evaluation and management of concussions.

MABE and all local boards place the highest priority on protecting our students' health and welfare while under our care and supervision, and therefore appreciate this bill's intent to expand the definition of concussion, and promote the expansion of mandated training for coaches and others involved with outside groups using school premises. However, MABE believes the bill would place an undue burden on school systems to convert our in house training programs into much broader public education programs and to establish fee-based training programs for non-school employees.

For these reasons, MABE requests an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 840.