

Testimony in Support of HB 935 with Amendments

Venue-Specific Emergency Action Plans – High School Football Games – Requirements

Presented to the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

3/27/25

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan , and Members of the Committee,

My name is Ed Strapp, I am a Licensed Athletic Trainer in the State of Maryland and also a Nationally Registered Paramedic and Certified Flight Paramedic working in Maryland; and I am testifying today in **support of HB 935 with amendments** to ensure that the legislation effectively enhances student-athlete safety. While this bill is an important step in requiring venue-specific emergency action plans (EAPs) for high school football games, it is critical to clarify **the role, qualifications, and legal scope of mandated sideline healthcare providers (HCPs)** to avoid unintended consequences and ensure proper medical care.

Clarifying the Goal of Sideline Healthcare Coverage

The bill originally mandated the presence of **either a licensed athletic trainer (AT) or an ambulance with emergency medical services (EMS) personnel** at high school football games. It now includes physicians, nurses, and individuals licensed or certified to provide emergency medical services. However, it does not clearly define the **intended role** of these medical professionals. This lack of clarity raises critical questions:

- Is the primary objective to provide **emergency sideline care**?
- Should HCPs be authorized to **make return-to-play decisions**?
- Is the main goal to ensure **rapid transport to an appropriate hospital**?

Each of these objectives requires **different expertise**. Only **athletic trainers and sports medicine physicians** are specifically trained in **acute sports injury management, concussion protocols, and return-to-play decisions**. EMS personnel, while essential for emergency transport and stabilization, do not have the specialized training required to **assess injuries and determine whether an athlete is fit to return to play**. Nurses do not have the **specialized training for on the field emergency transport, stabilization, assess football specific injuries and determine whether an athlete is fit to return to play**.

Addressing Legal and Liability Concerns

Additionally, the bill lists several categories of healthcare providers who **may not have the legal authority to provide independent sideline coverage** without an overseeing employer or supervisory medical structure. This creates potential **liability risks** for providers who may be placed in situations beyond their legally defined scope of practice. To mitigate this risk:

1. The bill should **clearly define the legal responsibilities** of each healthcare provider type.
2. The legislation should **align scope of practice with state medical board regulations** to avoid legal conflicts.

Expanding Coverage to Other High-Risk Sports

Football is not the only high school sport with a significant risk of injury. **Lacrosse, wrestling, and basketball** also pose serious risks, including **concussions, orthopedic injuries, and cardiac emergencies**. Limiting these safety requirements to **football alone** fails to protect thousands of student-athletes who participate in other high-impact sports. **To ensure equitable safety standards, the bill should be expanded to cover all high-risk sports.**

Proposed Amendments to Strengthen HB 935

1. **Clarify the goal of sideline healthcare coverage** – Is the intent **emergency response, return-to-play decision-making, or injury transport**? The bill should specify this to avoid confusion and improper medical care.
2. **Limit return-to-play authority to licensed athletic trainers and physicians** – Other HCPs, including EMS personnel, nurses, and other licensed providers, should not be responsible for making return-to-play decisions.
3. **Define the legal scope and liability protections** for mandated sideline HCPs to ensure compliance with state laws governing medical practice.
4. **Expand the bill to include other high-risk sports** beyond football to ensure comprehensive athlete safety.

HB 935 is a significant step forward, but **these amendments are necessary to ensure its effectiveness** in protecting student-athletes. I urge this committee to adopt these changes and advance the bill in a way that fully addresses emergency preparedness and sideline medical care.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I welcome any questions.

Respectfully submitted,

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