

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2003 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 746 (Delegates Cardin and Morhaim)
Health and Government Operations

Approved Gear and Equipment - Youth Baseball

This bill requires the Secretary of Health and Mental Hygiene to adopt regulations for “youth baseball” that designate the types of approved baseball protective gear and equipment that are appropriate to each position.

Children on a youth baseball team under the age of nine in fiscal 2004, under the age of 12 in fiscal 2005, under the age of 15 in fiscal 2006, and under the age of 17 in fiscal 2007 and each fiscal year thereafter must use approved gear and equipment in order for the team to participate in a baseball game or practice. Violators will be issued a warning that informs the offender of the bill’s requirements and provides educational materials about approved gear and equipment.

The approved equipment and gear must meet or exceed the standards set by: the American National Standards Institute, the American Society of Testing and Measurement, the Snell Memorial Foundation, the National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment, the Protective Eyewear Certification Council, or any another organization designated by the Secretary.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2003.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill’s requirements could be handled within existing budgeted resources.

Local Effect: None. Any expenditures for protective youth baseball gear will be the responsibility of the parents or guardians of youth who play baseball coordinated by leagues or organizations.

Small Business Effect: Potential meaningful. Revenues for small businesses that sell protective baseball gear and equipment could increase significantly.

Analysis

Current Law: State statute does not address the types of athletic protective gear or equipment youth should wear when participating in organized games or practices.

Background: This bill is based on a Baltimore City ordinance that requires any person under the age of 16 to wear protective gear if he or she is participating in a baseball game or practice held by Little League Baseball or any another organization of two or more teams. Offenders are issued a warning that informs them of the requirements and contains educational materials about youth baseball protective gear.

Baltimore City Health Department regulations that became effective March 15, 2002 specify what protective gear players must wear. Batters and base runners must wear batting helmets with protective faceguards. Players who wear eyeglasses when they play and youth whose best-corrected vision in the poorest-seeing eye is 20/40 must wear sports goggles with polycarbonate lenses. Catchers are required to wear a catcher's helmet with faceguard and a dangling throat guard, shin guards, and a long-model chest protector.

A study on youth baseball injuries printed February 5, 2003 in *The Journal of the American Medical Association* found that there was a 23% reduced risk of ball-related injury for youth who used safety balls, which are not as hard as traditional balls. The study also found that there was a 35% reduced risk of facial injuries for youth that used faceguards.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland Association of Boards of Education; Baltimore City Health Department; "Evaluation of Safety Balls and Faceguards for Prevention of Injuries in Youth Baseball," *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, February 5, 2003; Department of Health and Mental Hygiene; Department of Legislative Services

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