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BILL:	House Bill 435	DATE:	February 10, 2022
SUBJECT:	Youth Sports Programs – Registrations, Personnel, and Policy	COMMITTEE:	Ways and Means
POSITION:	Information Only		
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## **EXPLANATION:**

The Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association (MPSSAA) is providing information for consideration regarding House Bill 435 – Youth Sports Programs – Registrations, Personnel, and Policy, which specifies new criteria as it relates to concussions and extracurricular programming.

The MPSSAA recognizes the seriousness of traumatic brain injuries and have taken many steps over the past decade to enact programs, policies, and continual monitoring of the health and safety of students.

COMAR 13A.06.08 *Head Injuries and Concussions in Extracurricular Athletic Events* was adopted in 2013 by the Maryland State Board of Education. Within COMAR 13A.06.08, a concussion is defined as, "traumatic brain injury (TBI) causing an immediate and usually short-lived change in mental status or an alteration of normal consciousness resulting from a bump, blow, jolt, shaking, or spinning of the head or body. The current COMAR definition aligns with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) descriptions of concussions. The MPSSAA is concerned with adding to the definition of concussion, "any type of direct or indirect hit to the head or body." This definition has the potential to create ambiguity and deem any play in high school contact and collision sports as a concussion.

The MPSSAA is concerned about setting standards for academic accommodations that are not designed to fit the individual analysis of each student. House Bill 435 would require a student to return to full academic participation before starting return to play protocols. Students may force themselves into academic situations they are not prepared for in order to obtain access to athletic participation. The CDC "Heads Up For Schools" guidelines state, "Healthcare providers involved in the student's diagnosis and recovery should provide an

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individualized plan for a student returning to school to help manage cognitive and physical exertion following a concussion. As a student recovers, healthcare providers can help guide the gradual removal of academic adjustments or supports that may be instituted as part of the recovery process."

Currently, the MPSSAA provides schools the CDC "Heads Up For Schools" guidelines as well as the Appropriate Educational Accommodations document developed by the MPSSAA Medical Advisory Committee. Medical professionals, who specialize in athletic injuries, including concussions, annually review these documents. These documents provide a variety of possible post-concussion effects and appropriately tailored educational accommodations. This document is fluid and continually evolves from the MPSSAA Medical Advisory Committee as medical information becomes available on concussions and traumatic brain injuries.

House Bill 435 does not differentiate the definition of "Youth Sport Programs" from interscholastic athletic programs found in public schools. Requirements of "Youth Sports Program Personnel" differ from local educational agency requirements and may lead to attrition of those who do not have direct and unsupervised access to students based on additional requirements.

COMAR 13A.06.08.04 states, "Each school system shall require a certificate of completion from a coaches' training course with refresher training every two years as a condition of coaching employment." Since the beginning of the 2013-14 school year, at every Maryland public school practice or contest, the entire coaching staff has been trained in concussion risk and management. The National Federation of State High School Associations' "Concussion in Sports" course, which is recognized by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as the official course for high schools, had over 7,100 Maryland coaches take the course to date during the 2021-2022 academic year.

Given these educational and training components currently in place, the MPSSAA believes the programs and policies advised by the MPSSAA Medical Advisory Committee are continually providing both awareness and education for all stakeholders to ensure opportunities for students to participate in high school athletics safely. The regulations found in COMAR 13A.06.08 as well as the additional resources developed and implemented continue to evolve with the changing medical information from concussion research.

The MPSSAA respectfully requests that you consider this information as you deliberate **House Bill 435.** Please contact R. Andrew Warner, at 410-767-0376, or <u>robert.warner1@maryland.gov</u>, for any additional information.