

TO: The Honorable Joan Carter Conway, Chairman
Members, Senate Education, Health & Environmental Affairs Committee
The Honorable Michael Lenett

FROM: Joseph A. Schwartz, III
Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
J. Steven Wise

DATE: March 17, 2010

RE: **SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT** – Senate Bill 865 – *Education – Student-Athletes - Concussions*

On behalf of MedChi, the Maryland State Medical Society and the Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, we support Senate Bill 865 with amendment.

Senate Bill 865 seeks to provide a framework to decrease the likelihood of significant injury to or death of student-athletes from concussions and head injuries. A concussion is a type of brain injury that may range from mild to severe and may disrupt the way the brain normally works. It is one of the most commonly reported injuries in children and adolescents who participate in sports and recreational activities. While a concussion may occur with or without loss of consciousness, the vast majority occur without a loss of consciousness. A student athlete who continues to play with a concussion or symptoms of head injury is especially vulnerable to greater injury or even death.

There are generally recognized return-to-play standards for concussions and head injury, however, many involved with youth athletics are not sufficiently aware of the sign, symptoms or dangers of concussion or other head injury and, as a consequence, some affected athletes are prematurely returned to play which places those students at significant risk for more severe brain injuries or even death. Senate Bill 865 charges the Department of Education with developing and implementing a program to provide awareness and training to coaches, school personnel, student athletes and their parents about the nature and risk of concussion, the criteria for return-to-play and the risks of not reporting injury and continuing to play.

Under the program, coaches will be required to verify that they have received the requisite training and parents and students will receive concussion and head injury information sheets to which they will acknowledge receipt before being allowed to

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participate. Further, if a student athlete is suspected of sustaining a concussion or other head injury, the student shall be removed from play and may not return until the student has been evaluated by a licensed provider who has been trained in the evaluation and management of concussions and who has given the student written clearance to return to play. MedChi and MDAAP strongly believe that the provisions and policies of this program will greatly improve the safety of our youth sports programs and decrease the likelihood of serious injury or death from concussion.

The legislation also provides for various immunity provisions. MedChi and MDAAP do not have a position on these provisions and are not clear on the basis for their inclusion in the legislation. They would strongly urge the Committee to focus on the provisions of the bill which address the education and safety provisions related to concussions in youth sports and to give Senate Bill 865 a favorable report.

For more information call:

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