Assemblymember Matt Dababneh Urges Action; Introduces Legislation to Improve High School Athlete Protections

Study Finds California Ranks Second Worst in Nation for Student-Athlete Safety

SACRAMENTO — The importance of Assembly Bill (AB) 1510, by Assemblymember Matt Dababneh, which would increase safety for student athletes, has become more urgent as a recent study by the University of Connecticut’s Korey Stringer Institute ranked California second to last in the nation in implementing health and safety policies designed to prevent sudden death and catastrophic injury in high school sports.

Why the poor rating? One key reason: California is the only state in the nation that does not regulate athletic trainers – professionals charged with the prevention, treatment and rehabilitation of injuries and illnesses sustained by athletes and individuals of all ages. This means anyone – regardless of education or certification – can be hired to act as an athletic trainer and provide treatment to athletes.

“After learning about the lack of regulation for athletic trainers, multiple parents have shared their concerns regarding their children’s safety during school sports,” stated Assemblymember Dababneh. “Parents trust these individuals to protect the health of these student athletes and be the expert on the sidelines when it comes to identifying major issues such as spotting the signs of heat stroke or a concussion. However, without the proper education and training, these signs can easily be missed. AB 1510 will effectively protect the public by ensuring the profession of athletic training is licensed, because no parent should wonder if their child will be safe on the field.”

Under AB 1510, individuals must be certified by the Board of Certification before they can call themselves “athletic trainers.” The bill already passed through the Assembly Committee on Arts, Entertainment, Sports, Tourism, and Internet Media with no “no” votes, and is scheduled
to be heard again at the beginning of 2018.

Currently, an estimated 30 percent of individuals calling themselves athletic trainers in California high schools are not certified and highly unqualified – posing significant risks to student athletes. Mistakes by non-certified athletic trainers can lead to serious issues, including permanent disability and death.

“We need parents to understand that the safety of their high school athletes could be at risk,” said Jason Bennett, president of the California Athletic Trainers’ Association (CATA). “There are many groups across California doing everything they can to ensure athlete safety, including the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) and National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS). Unfortunately, the state’s lack of regulation for the athletic training profession is severely undermining these efforts.”

Assemblymember Dababneh urges the public to get informed on the state’s lack of athletic training regulations, and will work with Governor Brown in passing AB 1510, which would define the scope of practice for the profession.

For more information about the bill, visit https://goo.gl/aKYTMw, and for information about Assemblymember Dababneh’s and CATA’s combined efforts to improve athlete safety, visit http://ca-at.org/.

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*Matt Dababneh represents the 45th Assembly District that includes the communities of Bell Canyon, Calabasas, Canoga Park, Chatsworth, Encino, Hidden Hills, Northridge, Reseda, Sherman Oaks, Tarzana, West Hills, Winnetka, and Woodland Hills. For more information please visit the Assemblymember’s website, www.assembly.ca.gov/a45.*