

Heath, Nancy

From: Mark Meyerhofer <bwnyjsl.president@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, July 07, 2016 1:06 PM
To: Miller-Williams, Barbara; Grant, Betty; Savage, Peter; Hardwick, Hon. Kevin; Loughran, Thomas; Rath, Hon. Edward; Burke, Hon. Patrick; Morton, Hon. Ted; Dixon, Hon. Lynne; Lorigo, Joseph; Mills, Hon. John
Subject: Concussion Letter
Attachments: Concussion letter to Poloncarz.BWNYJSL.pdf

Erie County Legislators,

Please see the attached letter in response to the Legislature's passage of Local Law Intro. No. 2-4, 2016, A Local Law Preventing Head Trauma From Concussions in Youth Sports. We would like this entered into the official record for public comments as part of the public hearing scheduled for July 12, 2016.

--

Mark Meyerhofer
President
Buffalo & Western New York Junior Soccer League



Buffalo & Western New York Junior Soccer League

July 7, 2016

Hon. Mark Poloncarz
Erie County Executive
95 Franklin St., 16th Floor
Buffalo, NY 14202

RE: Local Law Intro No. 2-4, 2016; A Local Law Preventing Head Trauma From Concussions in Youth Sports

Dear Erie County Executive Poloncarz:

The Buffalo and Western New York Junior Soccer League (BWNYSL) represents 30 soccer clubs in the Western New York region, 20 of which are located in Erie County. These 30 clubs participate in a travel soccer program that runs from May through July and is comprised of over 6,500 players and 600 coaches. The soccer clubs also run house programs, which represents approximately 50,000 players and 3,000 coaches. We are governed by the NYS West Youth Soccer Association, which is governed by US Youth Soccer (USYS).

I am writing today on behalf of these clubs to express our concern with this proposed law. Before I express those concerns, I would like to advise you of the pro-active manner in which we have addressed concussions, in terms of education, training, treatment and hopefully prevention.

In 2014 when the subject of concussions in youth sports was just beginning to be addressed, the League advised all clubs to require coaches, assistant coaches and team managers to undertake training in concussion awareness and safety, such as the *Heads Up Concussion in Youth Sports* program. In addition, we have links on our website (www.bwnysl.org) that provides a Concussion Procedure and Protocol document from USYS, as well as a link for Concussion Resources from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

In addition to this training, as part of the certification process under the US Soccer Federation (USSF) all referees are trained on the correct procedure to follow when a player is suspected of having a concussion during a game. The player is immediately removed from the game and the coach is advised of a possible concussion and informed that the player may not return to the field for the remainder of the game.

This year we also instituted a no heading rule for players in games at the Under 11 (U11) and younger age groups. Under the US Soccer Concussion Initiative Guidelines, issued November 2015, it is recommended that players in U11 programs and younger shall not engage in heading, either in practices or in games. Furthermore, it recommends that players in the U12 and U13 programs to limit training on headers per player per week. These new rules will officially take effect in 2017. However, BWNYJSL decided to take a pro-active approach and began following these guidelines this year.

BWNYJSL has several concerns with this local law, as outlined below:

Section 1: Legislative Intent. This section specifically notes "collision sports such as football, hockey, and soccer", however it does not mention other contact sports, such as lacrosse or even baseball or softball, where youth athletes could easily be hit in the head by a ball or collide with players in the field and suffer a concussion. This section should identify additional sports.

Section 2: Definitions. Under subsections b and c, "contact youth sport" and "collision youth sport" should be eliminated and/or expanded to include specific sports, including those identified above.

Section 3: Requirements for Supervisors. Under subsection b requiring organizations to "maintain a record" of those who have taken a course in concussion safety, it is unclear what this record should entail. In the case of BWNYJSL and its member clubs, should all supervisors be able to provide a certificate of course completion? Would the club simply be able to provide a list of supervisors who have taken a concussion safety course? We would recommend that the list of supervisors is sufficient to show compliance with the law.

Section 4: Enforcement. Under subsection c, it is unclear who shall be assessed a fine. Is it the organization or each supervisor? We recommend that no fines be incurred for a first offense. A warning and, more importantly, specific instructions regarding the importance of concussion safety training and what actions need to be taken, is sufficient and would achieve the same result. Along with the warning, a club or supervisor should be given 30 days to comply or be subject to a fine.

In addition to these concerns, it is unclear how this local law would be enforced on teams that are not located in Erie County. As stated previously, BWNYJSL has 20 clubs located within Erie County and 10 clubs located in Niagara, Orleans and Wyoming Counties. Are they subject to this local law as well? For soccer tournaments, teams travel to Erie County from other counties within the state. We also have soccer teams from other states, including Pennsylvania and Ohio, plus teams from Canada participate in tournaments in Erie County. Are they required to have all supervisors take the concussion safety course prior to playing in these tournaments?

Hon. Poloncarz

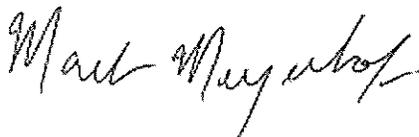
July 7, 2016

Page 3

Ideally, concussion safety training guidelines should be enacted at a state level, rather than a county level, in order to ensure all coaches in all sports have taken a course, not just those located in one county and for specific sports. Furthermore, if this is only enforced at the county level, other counties within the state could enact their own laws with different requirements.

While we agree that concussion safety training is very important and have been very pro-active in educating and training soccer clubs, this local law needs to be amended prior to enactment. We urge you to seek those amendments before signing this into law for Erie County. If you have any questions or comments, please contact me at president@bwnyisl.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Meyerhofer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "M".

Mark Meyerhofer, President
Buffalo & WNY Jr. Soccer League

cc: Erie County Legislature