

EDUCATION & LABOR COMMITTEE

Congressman George Miller, Chairman

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Press Office, 202-226-0853

**Chairman Miller Statement at Committee Hearing on the
“Protecting Student Athletes from Concussions Act”.**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – *Below are the prepared remarks of U.S. Rep. George Miller (D-CA), chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee, for a committee hearing on the “Protecting Student Athletes from Concussions Act”.*

Good morning.

Today we’ll discuss new legislation I introduced this week to help raise awareness about concussions for student athletes and improve students’ well-being both on the field and in the classroom.

Concussions have always been a part of the conversation about student athletes. But for far too long, we’ve talked about what has happened without taking any action to help student’s manage these dangerous injuries.

When a student suffers a concussion, it is not just their athletic future that is at stake. Without proper management, their performance in the classroom is also in jeopardy.

The “student athlete” needs to be as much about the “student” as the “athlete.”

We simply can’t talk about the student athlete without really thinking about what these brain injuries really mean for a student’s future.

In the concussion management arena, there is a saying. “When in doubt, sit him out.” Unlike a broken leg or a bruise, concussions aren’t as easily identified, but they are equally, if not more dangerous.

90 percent of concussions occur without loss of consciousness and many students simply do not know if they’re injured.

A prolonged diagnosis, when the pressure to play surpasses the need for treatment, can mean dangerous and harmful results to students.

In the past four years, there were nearly 400,000 reported concussions in high school athletes, and experts believe the prevalence of sport-related concussions is much higher than reported.

It is now commonly reported that 300,000 sport-related concussion occur annually, and once you factor in recreation-related concussions –like those occurring on the playground, the number rises dramatically.

We need to empower students to know when they may be at risk.

Students deserve to know the signs, symptoms and risks of concussions so they're able to take the appropriate next steps to prevent further injury and to prevent their success in school from suffering.

Student athletes with information about the symptoms of concussion are more likely to treat and manage their injuries.

Many states have already taken action but there is little regulation on the whole to ensure that students in every state will have the same minimum protections.

High school athletes are at greater risk of sports-related concussions than college or professional athletes because their younger brains are more susceptible to injury and female youth athletes are even more likely to suffer from concussions.

The Protecting Student Athletes from Concussions Act will help improve concussion safety and management for student athletes by requiring school districts to develop and implement a standard, community-based plan for concussion safety and management.

It will require school districts to take four minimum steps. These will set a floor in terms of what school districts will have to do. I am confident many states will far exceed these minimum expectations.

First, similar to a plan the NFL has implemented for its players, schools must post information about how to prevent and manage concussions for students to see. The information must be publicly visible and on the school's website.

Second, when a student who is suspected of sustaining a concussion during a school-sponsored athletic activity, he or she must be removed from the game, prohibited from returning to play that day and evaluated by a health care professional. Parents must also be notified.

And third, schools must provide support for students recovering from concussions, and access to special education services for students who are not recovering.

This is common-sense legislation to protect our students.

We may not fully understand the complexities of concussions, but do know enough to improve outcomes for student athletes now. Recent news reports about the prevalence and dangers of concussions have made it very clear that we need to help prevent these injuries on all levels.

The National Football League has already taken important steps to protect their athletes from the risks of concussions. At the very least, our schools should do the same.

Athletics play an important role for student development. Team sports teach students about leadership, teamwork and commitment.

Unfortunately, injuries are a part of any sports team and injury management should also be a key component. But we have to do better for our students when they're hurt and need the most support.

I hope my colleagues will join me in supporting this legislation.

The bill is supported by leading groups representing teachers and parents, school administrators, the disability community, medicine, sports medicine and athletic organizations. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses about why it is so urgent that we help protect our students from the risks of concussions and keep them informed and safe.

Thank you for joining us today.

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