

# Durbin Introduces Bill To Improve Concussion Safety In School Sports

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WASHINGTON—U.S. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL) today introduced the *Protecting Student Athletes from Concussions Act* to strengthen elementary and secondary school procedures for preventing, identifying, and treating student-athletes who sustain concussions. While athletics are important to helping students learn team-building skills and connect with their peers, especially following the COVID-19 pandemic, participating in school sports is not without risk. The National Federation of State High School Associations estimates that about 140,000 students playing high school sports suffer concussions every year, though many go unreported. Despite

potential long-term impacts, concussions are not always easily diagnosed, and symptoms do not always manifest themselves immediately.

Durbin's bill requires states to adopt a "when in doubt, sit it out" policy, which prevents student athletes suspected of having sustained a concussion from returning to play the same day and only allowing them to return to play once they have been evaluated and cleared by a qualified health care professional. The "when in doubt, sit it out" policy is based on an American College of Sports Medicine's 2021 report on concussions and the American Academy of Neurology's guidelines on sports concussions that recommend that any athlete suspected of a concussion should not return to play on the day of their injury under any circumstance.

"A concussion is a traumatic brain injury that affects brain function, and the 'walk it off' mentality is not in the best interest of athletes. Instead, it can lead to long term consequences. We must take head injuries seriously, especially when it comes to youth sports," said Durbin. "Implementing a 'when in doubt, sit it out' policy will protect the health of our students on the field, court, and track."

"The American College of Sports Medicine has been a longtime advocate for the health and safety of all athletes, including youth athletes," said Anastasia Fischer, M.D., FACSM, President of the American College of Sports Medicine. "We enthusiastically support this legislation. Education, assessment, identification and standard guidelines are not just good ideas, they're potentially life-saving."

"Concussions are a common type of brain injury and must be taken seriously. As the world's largest association of neurologists, and the trusted authority on sports concussion, the American Academy of Neurology finds it critical for states to have concussion safety plans in place, and to ensure that athletes are evaluated by highly trained medical professionals after a possible concussion before they return to play. This legislation is important in making sure that the developing brains of student athletes are protected," said Orly Avitzur, M.D., MBA, FAAN, President of the American Academy of Neurology.

Organizations endorsing Durbin's *Protecting Student Athletes from Concussions Act* include: American College of Sports Medicine, American Academy of Neurology, Major League Baseball (MLB), National Basketball Association (NBA), National Football League (NFL), National Hockey League (NHL), National Lacrosse League (NLL), National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), National Women's Soccer League (NWSL), Premier Hockey Federation (PHF), U.S. Soccer Federation, Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA), American Academy of Sports Physical Therapy, American Physical Therapy Association, Illinois High School Association, National Association of Schools Psychologists, National Association of Secondary

School Principals, National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA), National Council of Youth Sports (NCYS), National Disability Rights Network (NDRN), National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association (NIAAA), Pop Warner Little Scholars, Safe Kids Worldwide, The Arc, and The Sports & Fitness Industry Association (SFIA).