

SENATE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 2901

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: DECEMBER 10, 2020

The Senate Higher Education Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 2901 with committee amendments.

As amended, this bill amends section 1 of P.L.2019, c293 (C.18A:11-3.10) to require that the following criteria be included in the “Heat Participation Policy” for student-athletes adopted by the New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association (NJSIAA):

(1) at least a five-step progression of heat-acclimatization modifications, with specific modification of equipment, if applicable to the sport, specific modification of work to rest ratios, specific modification of total practice time, specific modification of water breaks, and the use of shaded area for rest breaks;

(2) WetBulb Globe Temperature guidelines; and

(3) a requirement that student-athletes have uninhibited access to hydration and a cooling space which can be a shaded area or an indoor air-conditioned area. At a WetBulb Globe Temperature level of 80, ice will be available to coaches and student-athletes.

The bill requires public institutions of higher education to adopt a policy for the prevention and treatment of exertional heat illnesses in athletes. The criteria for the policy at these institutions would be the same as those adopted by the NJSIAA for school districts.

This bill requires the Commissioner of Education and the Secretary of Higher Education to develop a pamphlet that provides information about exertional heat stroke to student-athletes and, in the case of school districts and nonpublic schools, to the parents or guardians of student-athletes. The pamphlet must include: an explanation of exertional heat stroke; how to reduce the risk of exertional heat stroke; factors which may increase a student’s risk for exertional heat stroke; a description of early warning signs of exertional heat stroke; how to recognize symptoms of exertional heat stroke; appropriate ways to treat exertional heat stroke; and a form to be signed by the student-athlete and coaches, assistant coaches, and athletic trainers acknowledging receipt and review of the pamphlet. In the case of school districts and nonpublic schools, the parent or guardian of the student-athlete must also acknowledge receipt and review of the pamphlet.

The bill also requires that an investigation conducted by an independent third party be commissioned in the case of the death of a student-athlete which is related to his athletic performance. In the case of school districts, the investigation will be commissioned by the Commissioner of Education and in the case of public institutions of higher education, it will be the institution that commissions the investigation. The results of the investigation will be provided to the parent or guardian of the student-athlete and also will be made public, to the extent permissible under federal and State law.

This bill is in response to the tragic death of Braeden Bradforth who left his home in Neptune Township, New Jersey in the summer of 2018 to attend a community college in Kansas. Braeden passed away at school from exertional heat stroke following a grueling conditioning test his football team was made to run in the heat of August. This bill addresses the serious issue of exertional heat stroke among student athletes.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amended the bill to:

1. require that the "Heat Participation Policy" for conducting practice or games in all sports during times of heat or humidity follow guidelines developed by the New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association;
2. clarify that the pamphlets developed under the bill to provide information about exertional heat stroke to student-athletes must include information on how to decrease the risk of exertional heat stroke;
3. delete references to "WetBulb Global Temperature" and insert references to "WetBulb Globe Temperature"; and
4. make technical changes to the bill's title.