

Governor Phil Murphy

Governor Murphy Signs Legislation to Enhance Student-Athlete Safety

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TRENTON – Today, Governor Phil Murphy signed two bills into law that will enhance student-athlete safety in New Jersey schools.

“School sports are a longstanding part of the fabric of our state,” **said Governor Murphy**. “By enacting these measures today, we are making sure that student-athletes have the resources and protections to enjoy school sports programs safely.”

“Too often we hear of tragedies occurring on sports fields that could have been avoided if the adults were properly trained to quickly address the situation,” **said Dr. Lamont O. Repollet, Commissioner of Education**. “The steps that we’re taking today will help provide greater levels of preparedness and protection, which will create a safer environment for student athletes throughout the state.”

S2443 requires each school district that is a member of the New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association is to adopt the association’s “Heat Participation Policy” for conducting practices and competitions in all sports during times of high heat or humidity. Under the bill, the association’s policy must address the scheduling of practices and competitions during times of various heat and humidity levels, the ratio of time devoted to workouts to time allotted for rest and hydration during various heat and humidity levels, and the heat and humidity levels at which practice will be canceled. The bill also requires these school districts to purchase a WetBulb Globe Temperature (WBGT) tool to measure the heat stress in direct sunlight at the practice site. Heat stress consists of temperature, humidity, wind speed, the angle of the sun, and cloud coverage.

Primary sponsors of the bill include Senator Patrick J. Diegnan Jr., and Assemblymembers Valerie Vainieri Huttle, Nancy J. Pinkin, and Angela V. McKnight.

“Our top priority must always be to protect our student-athletes,” **said Senator Diegnan**. “The presence of high heat and humidity levels during athletic events puts the health and well-being of our student-athletes at risk. We should take every precaution necessary to ensure their safety and to prevent tragedies. New Jersey has become a leader in implementing policies ensuring the safety of student-athletes and this law further raises the bar for student safety standards.”

“New Jersey can proudly tout itself as having the most comprehensive health and safety policies for its student athletes,” **said Assemblywoman Huttle**. “But following last year’s incident in my very own district, where five Bergen Arts and Science Charter School students suffered heat stroke during gym, it is clear there is more work to be done. Under this law, we can reaffirm New Jersey’s commitment to putting student safety first.”

“Heat stroke from practicing or playing in hot weather can bring on sudden cardiac arrest, causing otherwise healthy student athletes to suffer,” **said Assemblywoman Pinkin**. “By enacting this legislation, we are



arming schools with the appropriate tools and guidelines for safe and responsible action.”

“Accounting for the intensity of weather, especially during New Jersey’s very hot and humid summer months, is extremely important if we want to do our best to safeguard student well-being,” said **Assemblywoman McKnight**. “By requiring schools to adopt the NJSIAA’s guidelines, we can hold schools accountable to a set standard.”

S2494 requires that any school district that includes any of the grades six through 12 establish and implement an emergency action plan for responding to a serious or potentially life-threatening sports-related injury. The plan will document the proper procedures to be followed when a student sustains a serious injury while participating in sports or other athletic activity. The plan will be specific to the activity site and is required to be developed in consultation with local emergency medical services personnel.

Primary sponsors of the bill include Senators Patrick J. Diegnan Jr., Sandra B. Cunningham and Assemblymembers Benjie E. Wimberly, Verlina Reynolds-Jackson, and Nancy J. Pinkin.

“Emergency action plans equip schools with the ability to effectively act during a scenario where a student suffers a serious injury during a sporting event,” said **Senator Diegnan**. “It is during these situations where every second matters and this law will ensure our schools are prepared if an emergency arises.”

“In order to ensure the best possible outcomes, schools must be prepared when students sustain severe injuries,” said **Senator Cunningham**. “By requiring schools to partner with their local emergency medical personnel to establish a response plan, we can make sure proper protocols are in place to treat students when they are seriously hurt during a sporting event.”

“In instances where schools are equipped with the training and procedures to manage injury there are almost always better outcomes,” said **Assemblyman Wimberly**. “After years in high school athletics myself, I know that injury is sometimes inevitable and that inevitability means we have duty to be prepared for any type of crisis at all times. Our students deserve the best of the best, inside and outside of the classroom, under this law we are holding schools to that promise.”

“Playing and enjoying the sport you love cannot and must not be a potential death sentence,” said **Assemblywoman Reynolds-Jackson**. “New Jersey will continue to lead on student health and safety, and we will continue to do so every single day.”

“Sports function to enhance the educational experience of our students,” said **Assemblywoman Pinkin**. “Making sure our schools are equipped to handle injury whether it’s a broken bone, concussion or a heart attack is about safeguarding the collective well-being of our student body and maintaining the trust between schools, students and their parents.”

“We’re proud that Gov. Murphy signed S2443 and S2494 into law today,” said **Marie Blistan, President of the New Jersey Education Association (NJEA)**. Students benefit from participation in school sports, and these laws will help keep kids safe and schools prepared to act in the event of an emergency. We applaud the Murphy administration for enacting these simple, yet powerful measures to improve yet another facet of public education.”

“On behalf of the nearly 285,000 New Jersey interscholastic athletes we serve, we applaud the governor and legislature for taking important strides to protect the safety and wellbeing of these students,” said **Larry White, Executive Director of the New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association (NJSIAA)**. “By supporting our state’s nationally recognized heat and humidity policy and helping our member schools upgrade safety and security measures, they’ve affirmed New Jersey’s role as a national leader in safeguarding the needs of student athletes.”

The Athletic Trainers' Society of New Jersey, Inc. (ATSNJ) is excited and extremely pleased to see Governor Murphy signing these two pieces of legislation into law,” said **Kevin W. Brile, A.T., C., CSCS, EMT-B**,

President of the Athletic Trainers' Society of New Jersey, Inc. "Requiring New Jersey's schools to establish an Athletics' Emergency Action Plan and follow the State's Heat Participation Policy helps ensure safer participation by their student-athletes. Licensed athletic trainers strive to provide the safest competitive environment for their athletes and will continue to advocate for the health, safety, and wellness of the state's physically active."

"We are pleased that steps are being taken to address students' safety in regard to heat stress which is often experienced during school sports," **said Heather Sorge, Campaign Organizer for Healthy Schools Now, NJ Work Environment Council.** "As New Jersey continues to suffer the impact of climate change, having policies and emergency plans to protect our student-athletes in extreme temperatures is critical to their health and well being. These bills highlight the importance of emergency preparedness, something the NJ Work Environment Council strongly promotes."

TRENTON - Governor Phil Murphy today signed S4141, also known as "Paul's Law", which will authorize parents or guardians to request the use of an individualized health care plan for students with epilepsy or seizure disorders. The law is named after Paul St. Pierre, a 13-year-old boy from Maple Shade who has epilepsy and advocated for the legislation.

"Every student deserves to learn and thrive in their educational environment, without worrying about their safety," **said Governor Murphy.** "Paul's Law will ensure that the safety of children with seizure disorders is a priority in our schools. I thank Paul and his family for bringing attention to this issue that affects so many parents and children across our state."

The legislation signed today authorizes a parent or guardian of a student with epilepsy or a seizure disorder to request use of an individualized health care plan. This individualized health care plan will be developed for each student by the school nurse, in consultation with the parent or guardian of a student with a seizure disorder and other appropriate medical professionals. The plan will be consistent with the recommendations of the student's health care providers and will outline a set of procedural guidelines that provide specific directions about what to do in an emergency. Additionally, boards of education will be required to ensure that all building staff are trained in the care of students with epilepsy and seizure disorders.

"It is impossible to describe the magnitude of Governor Murphy signing Paul's Law. This law will not only help my son Paul feel safe in school, it will protect 12,000 children in New Jersey that have epilepsy. Furthermore, It will give parents across the state peace of mind while their children are in school," **said Paul St. Pierre, the namesake of the law, and his mother, Colleen Quinn.** "None of this would have been possible without Senator James Beach who spearheaded this legislation after our initial meeting. He has shown us that citizens, even a 13 year old boy can help to make change in the world. We are forever grateful to him. Lastly, we would like to thank Governor Murphy for signing this legislation into law. Today our governor has made New Jersey only the 5th state in the nation to create seizure safe schools. We would like to thank Governor Murphy for making this law a reality."

"Schools must provide safe spaces for all children, including students who experience seizure disorders," **said Dr. Lamont O. Repollet, Commissioner of Education.** "Providing training to staff will enable adults to recognize the early signs of seizures in students and provide them with swift access to the care they need."

"Approximately 12,000 children in New Jersey have been diagnosed with epilepsy, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control," **said Department of Health Acting Commissioner Judith Persichilli.** "Paul St. Pierre is a brave young man and I commend him for his advocacy to help protect other children with this neurological disorder. It is critical that teachers, principals and other school personnel receive training in how to recognize and respond to a student experiencing a seizure in school. It's also important for parents to ensure their child's school has an up-to-date health plan for their child."

Primary sponsors of the legislation include Senators Jim Beach and Kip Bateman, and Assemblymembers Mila Jasey, Annette Quijano, and John McKeon.

“As a former teacher, I know that an unexpected crisis can occur at any time during the school day. However, if a student has a seizure disorder, appropriate training, complete information and an individualized health care plan can allow school personnel to be better prepared,” **said Senator Beach**. “Thanks to the advocacy of Paul St. Pierre, this legislation will go a long way in educating our teachers and school personnel on how to handle a situation when one of their students has a seizure, whether it is in the classroom or at an after-school event.”

“There are 12,000 students throughout New Jersey with a seizure disorder,” **said Senator Kip Bateman**. “If you’re the parent of a child with epilepsy, you want to be assured that all teachers, nurses, and school bus drivers are properly trained and can care for your child until advanced medical help arrives. I applaud Paul for his successful advocacy to ensure Garden State schools have the tools to create a ‘seizure smart’ epilepsy action plan which will save lives.”

In a joint statement, **Assemblymembers Jasey, Quijano, and McKeon said:**

“It’s vitally important that New Jersey’s schools and teachers are well-equipped with the tools and knowledge to provide safe, enriching learning environments for students with epilepsy.

“In creating the mechanisms for schools to work with parents and guardians alongside nurses, teachers and administrators, children suffering from seizures would be guaranteed the extra support and care they need to see their full potential in the classroom realized.

“We’d like to give special thanks to Paul St. Pierre, who the bill is named for, and Miranda West, a Columbia High School student and National Epilepsy Foundation teen spokesperson, for their continued advocacy and help in ensuring New Jersey schools are safe for all students.”

“Paul St. Pierre is a leader and a role model for all children living in New Jersey. Paul’s advocacy not only for himself, but for the 12,000 children living with epilepsy in the Garden State, will make our schools a safer place for all children living with epilepsy,” **said Liza Gundell, CEO of the Family Resource Network which includes Epilepsy Services of New Jersey**. “Children spend the majority of their day in school under the care of school personnel and in the company of their peers. Empowering educators and students with knowledge to not only recognize seizures, but the skills to act and treat a student who may be experiencing a seizure can ultimately save a child’s life. Epilepsy Services of New Jersey is proud to provide monthly on-line seizure first aid and recognition training, as well as in-person training for school’s throughout New Jersey. Paul’s Law ensures that all New Jersey Schools are well-equipped with the tools necessary to provide a safe and enriching environment.”

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