



March 8, 2011

The Honorable Rob Eissler
House Committee on Public Education
1100 Congress Avenue, E1.408
Austin, Texas 78701

Dear Chairman Eissler:

Re: House Bill 677 by Lucio III

The Texas Medical Association and Texas Pediatric Society strongly support athletics for young Texans. Sports help build strong bodies, active minds, and good citizens. We also know any sporting activity has risks. That is why TMA and TPS support the intent of Rep. Eddie Lucio III to keep young Texas athletes safe. A concussion is a common injury that often goes unrecognized and unreported. It may be dangerous and have long-lasting complications if not treated properly.

More science is emerging on the long-term effects of concussion. However, there is no consensus on a comprehensive management strategy for concussions. Athletic and medical organizations have developed many different recommendations pertaining to the prevention, diagnosis, and management of concussions.

Concussions, when mild, may not be easily identified, especially if they do not involve straightforward signs and symptoms, such as a loss of consciousness. Athletes may not realize they have a concussion and may sustain a second injury, which puts them at risk of cerebral swelling or even death. These concerns are especially true for child and adolescent athletes, whose brains and bodies are still developing. Adolescents' particular physiological responses make them unique to treat, and they may require more recovery time. For these reasons, TMA and TPS support developing a comprehensive, evidence-based strategy for managing concussions among student-athletes.

We want to work with the author and members of this committee to create safe opportunities for young athletes to participate in sports. Here are few recommendations to ensure a comprehensive strategy:

- A cognitive assessment is only a single part of concussion management, and should be used only in conjunction with an examination and physical assessment by trained medical professionals with expertise in adolescent health.
- The reliability of any instrument used for baseline testing of cognitive function has not been established yet and may evolve over time. Therefore, it should not be specified in statute.
- We need uniform guidelines for preparticipation exams by physicians or their delegates.
- Education on concussion management for school personnel, athletes, and families is critical.

The Texas University Interscholastic League's medical advisory committee is charged with reviewing the latest evidence and research to implement best practices and resources for Texas' school athletes. We believe newly developed UIL policies should be given the opportunity to have a positive impact on Texas athletes. We would like to work with UIL and members to study the impact of this new policy and its implementation after the 2011-12 competition seasons in high-impact sports. TMA and TPS would like again to thank Representative Lucio for his effort to protect student-athletes. We appreciate the committee's thoughtful deliberation on these and other matters related to student health.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan R. Bailey, MD".

Susan R. Bailey, MD, President
Texas Medical Association

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James L. Lukefahr, MD".

James L. Lukefahr, MD
Texas Pediatric Society