

# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

## Commission on Youth

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### **Commission on Youth Legislation to Address Student-Athlete Concussion Protocol Advances** *House and Senate pass respective versions of changes to statute requiring Return to Learn protocol*

**RICHMOND** – Delegate Christopher K. Peace, Chairman of the Virginia Commission on Youth, is pleased to announce the passage of legislation that originated from the Commission’s study – *Student-Athlete Concussions*. The bills provide additional protections to Virginia’s students by improving the identification of students who may require further evaluation prior to participating in interscholastic athletics as well as protecting those students who have sustained concussions and are particularly vulnerable for re-injury.

Speaking about the Commission’s recommendations, Delegate Peace stated, “Over the course of the past year, Commission members have worked closely with families and stakeholders to develop legislation with the goal of helping schools better respond to students who have incurred concussions. The Commission on Youth, in partnership with the Virginia Department of Education, convened a Round Table of experts to discuss this very important topic. The Round Table was comprised of over 50 subject-matter experts including university professors, neurologists, school officials, athletic trainers, sports medicine representatives, and parents. The Round Table participants assisted the Commission in formulating recommendations for the study. I congratulate our members and the bills’ patrons for addressing this very important subject.”

House Bill 954, patroned by Delegate Mark Keam, passed the House of Delegates unanimously on February 8. The legislation requires school divisions to develop policies and procedures regarding "Return to Learn Protocol" by July 1, 2016, consistent with either the local school division's policies and procedures or the Board of Education's *Guidelines for Policies on Concussions in Student-Athletes*. In addition, the legislation also changes the group covered by the statute from “student-athlete” to “student”. Delegate Mark Keam stated, "As a member of the Virginia Commission on Youth and as a parent of two middle school kids, I was pleased to lead an effort to expand protections for young Virginians who suffer from concussions. With input and support from a wide range of stakeholders, we were able to pass House Bill 954 to ensure that all students, not just athletes, in all public schools can receive the latest expert guidance on returning to learn."

Senate Bill 665, patroned by Senator David Marsden, passed the Senate unanimously on February 2. This legislation requires all student-athletes in middle school who participate in school-sponsored athletics to have a pre-participation physical examination. Currently, there is no clearly delineated eligibility standard requiring middle school students to obtain a pre-participation physical examination. Pre-participation physical examinations help to identify athletes with medical conditions who may require further evaluation and treatment before participation. Senator Marsden stated, “The main goal of pre-participation physical examinations is to protect the health and safety of middle school athletes in training and competition.

Untreated illnesses or injuries may be identified during pre-participation physical examinations as well as those athletes who have not successfully rehabilitated from previous injuries.”

The Virginia Commission on Youth is a bipartisan, standing legislative commission of the General Assembly comprised of 12 members (six Delegates, three Senators, and three citizens) that provides a legislative forum addressing the needs of and services to the Commonwealth's youth and their families. The Commission contributes to the General Assembly's ability to make sound policy decisions based on well-studied and reasoned recommendations. Additional information about the Commission on Youth and the Commission's initiatives can be obtained on the Commission's website at <http://vcoy.virginia.gov>.

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