

ASSEMBLY BILL

No. 1

Introduced by Assembly Member Cooper

December 3, 2018

An act to add Article 2.7 (commencing with Section 124240) to Chapter 4 of Part 2 of Division 106 of the Health and Safety Code, relating to youth athletics.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 1, as introduced, Cooper. Youth athletics: California Youth Football Act.

Under existing law, a school district, charter school, or private school that elects to offer an athletic program is prohibited from allowing a high school or middle school football team to conduct more than 2 full-contact practices, as defined, per week during the preseason and regular season, as defined, and from conducting a full-contact practice during the off-season.

This bill would express legislative findings and declarations relating to youth football and specifically relating to player safety. The bill, on and after January 1, 2021, would require a youth sports organization, as defined, that conducts a tackle football program, to comply with certain requirements, including, among other things, not conducting more than 2 full-contact practices, as defined, per week during the preseason and regular season, and not holding a full-contact during the off-season.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: no.
State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

1 SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the
2 following:

3 (a) Youth football's highest priority is the safety and well-being
4 of its participants. California children must have the right to be
5 protected with safe youth football standards and practices
6 empowering parents to make informed choices regarding the
7 elected activities of their children.

8 (b) Nationwide, over 2.5 million players, coaches, cheerleaders,
9 and parent volunteers participate in youth football.

10 (c) Youth football promotes the values of teamwork,
11 self-discipline, diversity, academics, nutrition, leadership, and
12 acceptance.

13 (d) Youth football promotes an active lifestyle that helps combat
14 obesity rates in youth, which have increased by 300 percent over
15 the past four decades and that lead to a broad range of health
16 problems previously not seen until adulthood, such as high blood
17 pressure, type 2 diabetes, and elevated blood cholesterol levels.

18 (e) Youth sports have become increasingly expensive due to
19 the elimination of after school sports programs and the proliferation
20 of travel teams and tournament-centric scheduling, but youth
21 football remains an affordable neighborhood-based sport that is
22 accessible in every community in California, irrespective of
23 socioeconomic status or geographic location.

24 (f) Football is one of California's most popular sports, and the
25 safety and well-being of the players is youth football's top priority.

26 (g) Many youth football organizations have implemented
27 policies requiring the annual or biannual recertification of all
28 football helmets by the helmet manufacturer or by an independent
29 third party and the replacement of helmets that are damaged or
30 that do not meet the current safety standards or recertification
31 requirements.

32 (h) New helmet testing standards are being implemented to
33 enable players to wear the safest helmet possible, and
34 manufacturers continue to advance helmet technology.

35 (i) Blocking and tackling techniques designed to remove the
36 head from contact have become the nationwide standard for
37 teaching blocking and tackling, and coaches are required to
38 complete annual certification and continuing education in blocking

1 and tackling techniques that emphasize the removal of the head
2 from any blocking or tackling and that provide coaches with
3 noncontact drills designed to reinforce this training.

4 (j) The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
5 Concussion Protocol Training has become standard for many youth
6 football organizations and coaches in an attempt to minimize the
7 risk of injury for youth football players, and the training is designed
8 to identify those players who exhibit symptoms of a concussion,
9 to prescribe protocols for the immediate removal of those players
10 from the game or practice, and to outline stringent “return to play”
11 protocols that coaches, players, and parents must follow after a
12 youth football player has received clearance from a medical doctor
13 before that player is allowed to return to full participation.

14 (k) Youth football organizations have implemented policies for
15 concussion response, proper hydration, equipment fitting, and age
16 and weight requirements.

17 (l) California prohibits high school and middle school football
18 teams from conducting more than two full-contact practices per
19 week during the preseason and regular season, and California also
20 prohibits the full-contact portion of a practice from exceeding 90
21 minutes in any single day and completely prohibits full-contact
22 practice during the offseason.

23 (m) The awareness of the possible injury risks associated with
24 football are now widely known and accepted by parents, players,
25 coaches, officials, medical professionals, and the general public.

26 (n) The decision to play youth football ultimately rests with the
27 parents, after their thoughtful consideration of the risks and
28 benefits, as to whether participation in youth football is in their
29 child’s best interest.

30 (o) It is the intent of the Legislature to build upon prior
31 legislation, including Assembly Bill 2007 (Chapter 516, Statutes
32 of 2016), to improve youth tackle football safety with new safety
33 standards while honoring youth tackle football’s spirit and tradition.

34 SEC. 2. Article 2.7 (commencing with Section 124240) is
35 added to Chapter 4 of Part 2 of Division 106 of the Health and
36 Safety Code, to read:

Article 2.7. California Youth Football Act

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124240. (a) This article shall be known, and may be cited, as the California Youth Football Act.

(b) As used in this article:

(1) “Full-contact portion” of practice is defined as the period of time in drills or live action that involves contact at game speed.

(2) “Full-contact practice” means a session where one or more drills or live action is conducted that involves contact at game speed, as in an actual tackle football game or scrimmage. This includes simulations or drills that involve any number of players.

(3) “Off-season” means a period extending from the end of the regular season until 30 days before the commencement of the next regular season.

(4) “Play” includes participation in a youth tackle football game, scrimmage, or practice.

(5) “Preseason” means a period of 30 days before the commencement of the regular season.

(6) “Regular season” means the period from the first league football game or scrimmage until the completion of the final football game of that season.

(7) “Youth sports organization” means an organization, business, or nonprofit entity that sponsors or conducts amateur sports competition, training, camps, clinics, practices, or clubs.

124241. On and after January 1, 2021, a youth sports organization that conducts a tackle football program shall comply with all of the following requirements:

(a) A tackle football team shall not conduct more than two full-contact practices per week during the preseason and regular season.

(b) A tackle football team shall not hold a full-contact practice during the off-season.

(c) The full-contact portion of a practice shall not exceed 60 minutes in any single day.