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H7871 and H7872

Superintendent Don E. Cowart II
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March 20, 2024

Dear Representative Noret,

I am writing to share my thoughts on House bills **H7871 RELATING TO EDUCATION -- HEALTH AND SAFETY OF PUPILS** and **H7872 RELATING TO EDUCATION -- SCHOOL AND YOUTH PROGRAMS CONCUSSION ACT**.

Both H7871 and H7872 are intended to protect the health and safety of students when participating in both interscholastic games and practices. It is also commendable that both bills are geared to addressing the nature and risk of head injury and concussions in student athletes. Our district has the district medical doctor attend all home football games for this reason. We have also invested in additional officials in home ice hockey games to help keep the games clean and avoid unnecessary roughness and potential injuries. Coventry schools surely value the health and safety of students.

H7871 Requires all school districts to have an athletic trainer at each high school within the district. For Coventry that would be one new position with an average salary range of \$50,000-\$60,000 plus benefits. This is currently an unbudgeted expense. H7872 Requires all school districts to designate an athletic trainer to be available for high school athletic practices and games. Even for a district that only has one high school, this could potentially require more than one trainer. Coventry is a fairly large high school and has many sports games and practices running concurrently. For larger districts they may have to hire many trainers to meet the requirements of these two bills.

Finally, there is a risk of not having enough Rhode Island Board of Athletes-certified athletic trainers available to fill the school district demand by August 1, 2025. In addition there is some slight inconsistency between the two bills where H7801 requires a trainer and H7872 "encouraged to have an athletic trainer, or similarly trained person, at all recreational and athletic events."

Sincerely,

Don E. Cowart II

"Working Together To Improve Our Schools"

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