

FHSAA drafts bill that expands governor's reach over public school games

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LEE COUNTY, Fla. – Just weeks after the Florida High School Athletic Association voted overwhelmingly to stop asking young female athletes about their periods, there's word the governor could soon be taking over the association.

Some lawmakers have drafted a bill that would give the governor control and allow prayers before each public school game.

Students like Amanda Aleau are not comfortable with the plan.

"We need more diversity when it comes to decisions instead of one person's idea," Aleau said.

She, like many others, is concerned the governor could be calling the shots.

The FHSAA is a private non-profit organization with 16 board members, most of whom are elected.

HB 225 allows the governor to reduce the board to just eight members of his choosing.

Some young athletes are concerned with one person picking everybody to represent an entire state.

FHSAA board member Chris Patricca is one of those concerned with the proposal.

"Again, making sure that every county in the state is represented when you only have nine members who are appointed as opposed to elected, we might lose some of that diversity of thought," Patricca said.

Patricca, whose seat expires in June, represents students from Fort Myers to Miami, and she said that she believed everyone on the board took every decision made seriously.

The new proposal would also allow two minutes of opening remarks before each game. The remarks would not be reviewed ahead of time and could allow prayer or speeches.

"I would say that over the past year or year and a half maybe, politics has crept into the decision-making at the table," Patricca noted.

The FHSAA oversees all sports in grades six through twelve, and now lawmakers must decide whether to give the governor this new power. A decision will likely be made later this spring after lawmakers convene in regular session in March.