

# What they're saying: Reactions, statements pour in over new high school sports legislation

By Nick Stevens , HighSchoolOT managing editor



After the North Carolina legislature passed Senate Bill 452 last week, reactions from individuals and organizations were fast to come in.

The bill, if it becomes law, will strip the N.C. High School Athletic Association of much of its authority to independently govern high school sports in North Carolina. Instead, many of the policies and regulations will be set by the state board of education and the state superintendent of public instruction.

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## [NCHSAA; Senate gives approval](#)

Below are some of the statements released about the new legislation.

### **Senators say bill increases transparency**

**Sen. Vicki Sawyer (R-Iredell), Sen. Todd Johnson (R-Union), and Sen. Tom McInnis (R-Moore), the primary sponsors of the original NCHSAA legislation, released the following statement after the bill passed both the House and Senate on Friday:**

“This bill increases accountability and transparency for a private organization tasked with administering our children’s athletic experiences,” Sen. Sawyer said.

SB 636 is a culmination of three years of efforts to gain access to materials, financial records, and policies related to how high school athletics are governed. The bill provides much needed transparency and accountability in our public high school athletic system and removes the ability of a private organization to unilaterally make life changing decisions for our student athletes.

Internal documents obtained from the NC High School Athletic Association show it has failed to maintain transparency in the decision-making process, sought to remove parents and students from the process, and wants to shield their endowments from public scrutiny.

SB 636 includes commonsense requirements and rules to be met and followed. It prohibits intimidation and harassment by the private organization, particularly in the appeals process. Unnecessary and exorbitant fees will be limited. The bill requires the administration and enforcement of consistent rules for high school athletic activities. The

Superintendent of Public Instruction will enter a memorandum of understanding with the private organization with annual reporting requirements, audits, and oversight."

## **NCHSAA says it was blindsided by legislation**

**The NCHSAA posted the following statement on its Twitter account the day the legislation was passed out of the General Assembly:**

"Shortly after midnight this morning, the NC House of Representatives passed an insurance bill that was modified to contain updated language from Senate Bill 636; a bill that would greatly diminish the effectiveness of the North Carolina High School Athletic Association. The Association neither supports the bill, nor the manner in which our elected officials have attempted to force it through.

The NCHSAA has operated in good faith with the state legislators and the North Carolina Board of Education in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding that was signed in 2022 and has received no such correspondence to the contrary. In fact, the staff and NCHSAA Board Members have worked closely with the leadership team of the state board of education in recent weeks to discuss changes to the current eligibility rules.

"Today is a dark day for high school sports in North Carolina," said NCHSAA Commissioner Que Tucker. "This was a blindside tackle, and I am sorely disappointed in the actions of our state legislators. Any statement that would suggest that we have not honored our end of the current Memorandum of Understanding is grossly inaccurate. We have seen other state associations dismantled by their state legislatures and

ultimately, legislators don't know what they don't know. The NCHSAA is not just an office in Chapel Hill, it is the 436 schools that make up its membership. This bill, should it become law, silences the voices of those schools."

- **READ: [NCHSAA says new legislation was 'blindsided tackle'](#)**

The NCHSAA has worked for more than 110 years to be a beacon for education-based athletics in our state and across the nation. The goals of the association have always placed student athletes and their development as future members of society as a top priority. Not only does the staff of the Association work to host premier championship events, but it also operates by a robust handbook, developed by more than a century of improvements, to safeguard fair and sportsmanlike competition.

While the Association and its officers have the utmost respect for the Department of Public Instruction and State Board of Education, it is understood that those entities have a tremendous responsibility to all students in our state and already have their plates full. The NCHSAA has a dedicated, full-time staff devoted only to the guardianship of interscholastic athletic competition, including several Certified Athletic Administrators and former public school employees. With the support of a Board of Directors, which consists of Superintendents, Principals, Athletic Directors and Coaches from every region and every classification in North Carolina, the NCHSAA believes that it has assembled the best possible team to administer high school sports in our state."

**Gov. Roy Cooper will review the bill**

## **Spokeswoman for Gov. Roy Cooper (D) on whether or not he will sign the bill:**

"The Governor is concerned about this last minute legislation and he will review it carefully."

## **NFHS says NCHSAA is a model organization nationally**

**Dr. Karissa Niehoff, the Chief Executive Officer of the National Federation of State High School Associations, released a statement in support of the NCHSAA:**

"The National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) has become aware of North Carolina Senate Bill 452 which proposes significant changes in the leadership and implementation of high school sports in North Carolina. While we appreciate that many people are interested in supporting high school athletic programs and student-athletes, we are concerned that SB 452 may not achieve this objective most effectively.

The North Carolina High School Athletic Association has accomplished difficult and successful work for over 100 years. The work continues to be very complex, requiring not only expertise in the administration of education-based athletics, but also tremendous knowledge of the individual needs and attributes of the NCHSAA member schools, the needs of the students they serve, and the strategies necessary to ensure that personnel and facilities are prepared to provide successful programs. The development of by-laws, regulations, policies and procedures that best serve the overall NCHSAA membership is complicated, requiring collaboration among multiple stakeholders and

an understanding about the impact of decisions on program implementation and student participation.

The NFHS appreciates the people and the work of the NCHSAA; a state association that has been a positive influence among NFHS member state associations for many years. We commend the fine work of the NCHSAA."

## **Greater Raleigh Sports Alliance: NCHSAA is an excellent organization**

### **Scott Dupree, Executive Director of the Greater Raleigh Sports Alliance:**

"The Greater Raleigh Sports Alliance has enjoyed a 25-year partnership with the North Carolina High School Athletic Association. We have worked closely with the NCHSAA since 1998. My experience has always been that the NCHSAA is an excellent organization run by good people who genuinely have the best interests of the student-athletes and the schools at heart. I believe the NCHSAA does a superb job of managing the complex task of administering high school sports in North Carolina with more than 400 member schools spanning all 100 counties. I was not surprised to see that the N.C. Athletic Directors Association, the N.C. Coaches Association and even the National Federation of State High School Associations all have recently issued statements of support for the NCHSAA."

## **N.C. Coaches Association says NCHSAA should keep running high school sports**

**The following statement was released by the N.C. Coaches**

**Association:**

"The North Carolina Coaches Association stands with and supports the NCHSAA. We firmly believe that the NCHSAA is the best organization for the administration and regulation of high school athletics in the State of North Carolina."

**N.C. Athletic Directors Association says bill injects politics into high school sports**

**The N.C. Athletic Directors Association Board of Directors released the following statement:**

"The NCHSAA comprises superintendents, principals, athletic directors, and coaches at member schools. These individuals are the most qualified to determine who should represent their interests regarding the governance and regulation of education-based interscholastic high school athletics, not the State Superintendent or the Board of Education members.

This legislation is specifically designed to remove these most qualified individuals from the process that determines who represents them in matters related to high school athletics. Further, it injects unnecessary politicization into an organization that has seen its members successfully govern their affairs while working to benefit the student-athletes and schools of our state for more than 100 years."