

Commissioner tells schools new legislation will be 'devastating,' vows to 'stay in the storm'

By Nick Stevens , HighSchoolOT managing editor



When the N.C. General Assembly passed legislation last week that will overhaul the administration of high school sports if it becomes law, the N.C. High School Athletic Association was in the middle of its fall regional meetings.

Regional meetings are an opportunity for the NCHSAA staff and board of directors to travel to the eight regions of the state to meet face-to-face with its member schools.

Last week, the NCHSAA held its regional meetings in the western half

of the state, ending on Thursday. [Senate Bill 452 was amended late Thursday night and eventually passed](#) through the House after midnight, so the western half of the state was not able to hear directly from the NCHSAA about the legislation.

That is not the case this week though. Eastern regional meetings are underway this week, and on Tuesday morning a meeting was held in Duplin County.

NCHSAA Commissioner Que Tucker told the schools that the NCHSAA is in a "storm" right now, noting that the regional meetings this week have a different feel than the meetings last week.

"We're in a storm right now, but what I'm trying to do with our staff is keep them encouraged. We'll go slow and steady as we go through this storm, but we're not going to stop because if we do, we'll stay in the storm," Tucker said.

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Tucker spent time explaining some of the effects of SB 452, which is now in the hands of Gov. Roy Cooper. She said it removes the ability for the endowment fund to be used to give money and grants back to the schools, it keeps the NCHSAA from giving scholarships to students, and it takes away the NCHSAA's ability to have corporate sponsors.

"(Corporate sponsors) minimize the expenses we pay when we hold championships. We use those monies throughout the regular season, and the bill says the only time we'd be able to share information about those partners is in the playoffs," Tucker said. "It really ties our hands."

Tucker said the legislation will negatively impact the schools and the students who participate in athletic programs across North Carolina.

"This bill that is on the governor's desk will be devastating to you. I don't care what you think about Que Tucker, but it's you the membership who will be devastated. You may not realize it now, but if you read what's in the bill, it will be devastating," Tucker said.

Gov. Cooper has three options for the bill: sign it into law, allow it to become law without signing it by letting it sit on his desk for ten days, or veto it. However, even if he vetoes the bill, the legislation is likely to become law because Republicans hold super majorities in both the House and Senate.

If it becomes law, the full effects won't become real until July 2024, but things would begin to change behind the scenes immediately.

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

"As we share information with you today, this is how we will operate this year. There will be no changes to operations. The changes in operations moving forward will occur on July 1," Tucker said. "It's effective totally next July, but immediately upon (the governor's) signature, the state superintendent of public instruction replaces the state board of education in the current memorandum of understanding."

The NCHSAA is in the second year of [a four-year agreement with the state board of education](#), which the association was required to sign after the passage of House Bill 91 in the fall of 2021.

The current memorandum of understanding was negotiated by the

NCHSAA and the state board of education after a legislative investigation into the NCHSAA. It came after a bill introduced by three senators [threatened to dissolve the NCHSAA entirely](#).

Last year was the first year the NCHSAA operated under the memorandum of understanding with the state board of education, but if SB 452 becomes law, the state superintendent will have authority to enter into — or leave — such agreements.

Tucker said if SB 452 becomes law, the NCHSAA will have to negotiate a new memorandum of understanding.

Others speak out in support at regional meeting

C.B. Aycock High School principal and current NCHSAA board member Tod Morgan spoke at the regional meeting on Tuesday morning, and he expressed his support for the NCHSAA.

Morgan said the legislation is a "personal attack" against Tucker, alluding to the 2019 decision to keep Anson County's football team out of the state playoffs following an on-field fight against Richmond. NCHSAA rules say if three or more players are ejected for fighting, the team is ineligible for the playoffs.

In 2021, Sen. Tom McInnis (R-Moore), who represented Anson County at the time, told HighSchoolOT that decision is what sparked his interest in the NCHSAA. McInnis requested that Tucker and the NCHSAA change their ruling and allow the team in the playoffs, but the association declined. Tucker told HighSchoolOT at the time that she understood if the NCHSAA had changed its ruling, the investigation into

the association would not have happened.

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Joe Franks, a representative of the N.C. Coaches Association, also spoke in favor of the NCHSAA at the regional meeting on Tuesday.

"The coaches association supports the high school association and believes that the NCHSAA is the best group to run high school athletics in North Carolina," Franks said, [echoing a statement released by the NCCA last week](#).

Franks said he received a call from a counterpart in Florida on Friday asking what was happening in North Carolina.

"He said, 'Son, they did it to us about seven years ago, welcome to Florida. You tell your group to stand firm,'" Franks said.