

# Indiana Statehouse may force a change to IHSAA transfer eligibility rules

[Kyle Neddenriep](#)

Indiana lawmakers filed a bill this week that would allow more freedom for athletes to transfer without eligibility restrictions from the [Indiana High School Athletic Association](#).

House Bill 1492, authored by Rep. Cory Criswell, R-Middletown, calls to "remove language prohibiting certain students from enrolling into a school corporation primarily for athletic reasons." Under the current IHSAA bylaws, an athlete without a bona fide change of residence starts with limited eligibility (junior varsity), but can gain full eligibility if granted a waiver or if the IHSAA's decision is overturned in appeal. Athletically motivated transfers have not been allowed by the IHSAA.

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"In Indiana, we have prioritized school choice to give families the freedom to pursue the best educational opportunities for their children," Criswell said. "However, my colleagues and I are hearing growing concerns about student-athletes being denied eligibility by the IHSAA when transferring schools."

The IHSAA is expected to address a bylaw change itself in coming

months, likely discussing potential possibilities in more detail at Thursday's executive committee meeting. Criswell has previous experience as a teacher, basketball coach and as assistant athletic director at New Castle High School. Since last July, he has been the development director for the [Indiana Basketball Hall of Fame](#), in addition to his duties representing District 54 in the Indiana House of Representatives.

Criswell has been in conversations with the IHSAA in recent months about the bill.

"As a former teacher, coach and assistant athletic director, I've seen firsthand how important sports are to a student's overall development, and I want to ensure this process is handled the right way," Criswell said. "I've maintained a good relationship with the IHSAA and have been in constant contact with them throughout this process to make sure they have a seat at the table during these discussions. Together, we can find a solution that aligns with the values of school choice being fair to all student athletes."

IHSAA commissioner Paul Neidig has not been an advocate for allowing a one-time "free" transfer (with restrictions for recruiting, undue influence and past link that would remain in place), citing only 30% of athletic directors around the state in favor of a one-time transfer after an athletes' freshman year and only 13% in favor at any point in high school when the IHSAA conducted straw polls.

But Neidig said last month that he has been in conversations with state legislators for more than a year on potential changes to the transfer rule.

"I think forced is probably a strong word to use right now but we certainly have some friends in the House that believe we need to adjust the transfer rule," Neidig said last month. "Some would rather see us do it than it become a state law and that I do agree with. But there are a lot of things to consider with what a more liberal transfer rule looks like."

There will likely be more conversations between the IHSAA and member schools before a bylaw change is proposed. Neidig said the idea would be "trying to keep it from becoming NCAA-style but providing more flexibility." There has been discussion of a one-time transfer without restriction prior to an athlete's junior year with the ability to return to the original school.

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