

# Father of late West Virginia athlete vows to continue fight for sports safety legislation

CHARLESTON, W.Va. (WCHS) —

The Cohen Craddock Student Athlete Safety Act, named after 13-year-old Cohen Craddock who passed away in August after sustaining a head injury during a middle school football practice, passed the state Senate unanimously but was never voted on by the House of Delegates.

The inaction in the House means the bill, which was aimed at making student athletes in West Virginia as safe as possible, stands no chance of being passed this year.

Cohen's father, Ryan Craddock, said that the bill being bogged down like this is heartbreaking.

"I'm in disbelief that a bill that is set out to do nothing but good, to protect and possibly save lives for our kids would ultimately get its back turned by our officials," Craddock said.

Lead sponsor of the bill Sen. Mike Stuart, R-Kanawha, said that House leadership failed this bill and the good that would come from it, he also said that this bill dying in the House may have been a result of special interests at play under the golden dome of the capitol.

"Sadly, House leadership didn't make it a priority, didn't view it as a



priority, didn't feel it was something that we needed in West Virginia," Stuart said. "But they're out of touch with moms and dads. They're out of touch with grandmas and grandpas who see their grandkids competing every day on fields, courts and tracks across West Virginia."

This bill would have made soft shell helmet covers, also known as guardian caps, mandatory for middle and high school football practices.

Stuart said he is disappointed in the trajectory this bill took after leaving the Senate, but is hopeful for the future of it.

"I believe fundamentally that it's a matter of time before all 50 states, every student across America, the parents are gonna demand action on this issue," Stuart said. "I'd like West Virginia to lead on that effort rather than follow."

Ryan Craddock said that while this bill not passing is very discouraging, the fight for student athlete safety is far from over.

"I want to protect each and every family out there because I know what it's like," Craddock said. "I don't want them to go through the same thing that we're going through. Our children's safety should be first."

Craddock said he hopes to see this bill or one similar to it be introduced next year, not only to protect the thousands of student athletes in West Virginia, but to carry on his son's legacy.