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SFA**BILL ANALYSIS**

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Senate Bill 179 (Substitute S-3 as reported)
Sponsor: Senator Bev Hammerstrom
Committee: Health Policy

Date Completed: 5-6-03

RATIONALE

According to the Red Cross, about 11 million injuries put American youths in the hospital every year. Of these injuries, it is reported that 2.6 million, including an estimated 91,000 in Michigan, are sport-related. In the interest of preventing and responding to injuries and accidents, the American Red Cross provides training to the public in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), first aid, and sport safety, among other subjects. Because of the number of sport-related injuries and the success of the Red Cross training programs, some people believe that public school athletic coaches should obtain training in sport safety.

CONTENT

The bill would amend the Revised School Code to require that school athletic coaches hold valid certification in sport safety training. The board of a school district or public school academy would have to require each new person it employed or assigned as an interscholastic athletic coach to meet this requirement.

Coaches would have to complete a sport safety training course offered by the American Red Cross or an equivalent course approved by the State Board of Education. Certification would have to be current during the entire interscholastic season for the athletic activity a person was coaching.

People already employed or serving as interscholastic athletic coaches on or before the bill's effective date would be exempt from the certification requirement. In addition, certification would not be required if a coach had a physical limitation that made it impracticable for him or her to complete the course and obtain the certification.

If a coach with valid sport safety certification, in the course of his or her employment or service as a coach, provided physical aid within the scope of sport safety training to another person in an emergency, the coach would not be liable in a civil suit for damages resulting from an act or omission occurring in the provision of that aid, except for an act or omission constituting gross negligence or willful and wanton misconduct.

Proposed MCL 380.1523

ARGUMENTS

(Please note: The arguments contained in this analysis originate from sources outside the Senate Fiscal Agency. The Senate Fiscal Agency neither supports nor opposes legislation.)

Supporting Argument

Coaches who are knowledgeable about sport safety are more likely to prevent, prepare for, and respond effectively to sport-related injuries. It is reasonable to expect, therefore, that every interscholastic athletic team have on staff a coach trained in current safety methods. The Red Cross and the U.S. Olympic Committee have co-developed a sport safety training course to address this need. The six-and-one-half-hour class is designed to educate coaches about safety techniques, raise awareness of safety issues, and provide an atmosphere in which athletes can train and compete with the confidence that their coach has taken a sport safety course. The course includes training in first aid care and CPR. If the Red Cross were not available to provide sport safety training, the State Board of Education could approve a course with similar content. Reportedly, many other states mandate training in CPR and/or first aid for coaches.

Opposing Argument

Schools have enough difficulty recruiting teachers, let alone teacher-coaches. The bill would affect new hires, and could restrict the number of eligible candidates for coaching positions. Also, the requirement would be too expensive for some districts.

Response: The sport safety training course requires a minimal investment in time but provides a great return in peace of mind. The additional certification requirement would be minor enough that new teacher-coaches would not be deterred from accepting a job with a public school or public school academy. Furthermore, if a school found that it could not afford the \$50-\$75 per coach that it reportedly costs for sport safety training through the Red Cross, the school could create its own program with trained instructors, subject to State Board approval.

Opposing Argument

Certification in sport safety training would not guarantee that a coach would respond appropriately in a crisis, especially if the coach were not comfortable providing such care. New coaches who would be required to take the training, but did not want to perform the necessary procedures, likely would not renew their certification. Further, the bill could lead parents to assume mistakenly that coaches in a sport were qualified to administer certain care. A better approach would be for school administrators to find volunteers among the staff who were motivated and willing to become certified, and have at least one such person at each athletic event.

Legislative Analyst: George Towne

FISCAL IMPACT

The bill would have no fiscal impact on the State. There would be an indeterminate cost for obtaining the required certification. Many or most Red Cross organizations offer this training at a fee of \$50 to \$75 per person. The fee that is charged by other private, State-approved providers is unknown. This cost would have to be paid by either the school district or the coach.

Fiscal Analyst: Joe Carrasco

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This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan Senate staff for use by the Senate in its deliberations and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.