



Understanding Oral Injuries in Youth Sports

An Act Relative to Oral Injuries

Bill Sponsor: Senator Cynthia Stone Creem

Proposal

The National Youth Sports Foundation estimates that more than 5 million teeth will be knocked out in sporting activities this year. The costs associated with treating sports-related oral injuries are staggering – replacing a single tooth can range from \$1,800 to \$4,000. Many of these injuries result in a visit to the emergency room, further burdening an already strained healthcare system. And yet it is estimated that only 7% of all youth sports participants are required to wear mouth-guards all or some of the time.

A pilot study conducted in the state of Illinois by the American Dental Association (ADA) indicated that substantial safety benefits resulting from the use of mouth-guards. For example, football players, who are twice as likely to be exposed to the type of collision that could result in oral injury as basketball players, had a 95% lower probability of sustaining oral injuries. The difference is that while football players were required to wear mouth-guards the use of a mouth-guard in basketball was often optional. While the ADA study in Illinois provides some interesting data, the fact remains that we do not have a comprehensive study here in Massachusetts.

An Act Relative to Oral Injuries would remedy that discrepancy by mandating that the Department of Public Health (DPH) investigate and report on the incidence of oral injuries in youth sports. DPH will be charged with collecting data on the types of oral injuries, including but not limited to identification of high-risk sports, and the frequency, severity, and impact of oral health injuries on young athletes as well as including the types of sports most frequently associated with such oral injuries. The bill also asks that the department file the report along with recommendations and drafts of potential legislation.

Conclusion

The Massachusetts Dental Society urges the General Court to take favorable action on this item and require that the Department of Public Health investigate and report on the incidence of oral injuries in youth sports.

Quick Facts:

The National Youth Sports Foundation estimates that more than 5 million teeth will be knocked out in sporting activities this year.

A comprehensive study of oral injuries in youth sports in Massachusetts is an important step in minimizing the incidence of these painful and costly injuries.