



**House Primary and Secondary Education Committee  
HB 492 (Loychik, Pavliga) Coaches MH Training  
Tuesday, May 17, 2022**

Good afternoon, Chairwoman Manning, Vice Chair Bird, and Ranking Minority Member, Robinson and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify as a proponent of HB 492. My name is Ryan Weible, I am a licensed athletic trainer. I am testifying today on behalf of the Ohio Association of Athletic Trainers', which represents over 2,000 licensed athletic trainers in the state of Ohio. I am currently working as an athletic trainer at a health system in central Ohio, working with several middle and secondary schools to help students stay safe in their respective sports. Athletic trainers work with students to teach them how to prevent injuries and promote wellness, and also care for them after sustaining an injury to help them return to the same level of participation prior to their injury. I have been an athletic trainer for 15 years, working closely with student athletes over those years. As an AT, we are often times the only health care provider a student may see all year. Often times we are the ones to identify a student that may be having troubles with an eating disorders, substance abuse, depression and anxiety, abuse or other issue in their lives.

Unfortunately, you are likely familiar with the recent headlines over the past month of 5 different college athletes from different parts of the country who all died by suicide. If you read any of the profiles of these athletes, most of them did not appear to be suicidal to their family and friends. They were described as always being happy, excellent student, supportive teammate, leader, and dedicated athlete. It is hard to understand why and how a student that seems to be high achieving would be suicidal. It is an issue all across the country and even here in Ohio. According to the Ohio Department of Health's statistics over the past three years of available data: 221 Ohioans ages 15-24 died by suicide in 2020; 224 in 2019; and 243 in 2018. These are our high school and college students.

HB 492 requires coaches in Ohio to receive training on the signs and symptoms of suicide. As our athletes are feeling more pressure to succeed in their sport at younger ages, with very little time between seasons from school sport, to club sport, to travel teams, it is critical that Coaches are educated about suicide prevention. The world has changed drastically since I began as an athletic trainer, our students have more pressure on them from all directions, and sports used to be a place to go to relieve stress, unfortunately, the pressure is there too. HB 492 ensures that additional leaders in the community, who athletes admire and may trust to talk to about an issue, are aware of what to look for and what to do if they suspect an athlete may be in need of help. We recognize the importance of this topic and also all the certificates and trainings coaches have to do – Cardiac, Concussion, CPR, Coaches first aid and that does not include anything to do with their individual sport. However, the area of mental health has changed a lot in the last 5 years and will probably change a lot in the next 5. We would encourage this committee to take that into consideration when some coaches may only be required to take this training on their Pupil Activity Permit (PAP) cycle – which could be every 3-5 years.

Athletic trainers are trained to recognize the signs and symptoms of suicide, and our Association is currently looking at ways that we can help lend more support in the schools to assist with this issue. Not only are we concerned about our athletes' physical safety, but their mental wellbeing too.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am happy to answer any questions at this time.