

May 17, 2022  
Chair Gayle Manning  
Primary and Secondary Education Committee  
Ohio House of Representatives

RE: Support for HB492

Chair Manning, Vice Chair Bird, Ranking Member Robinson and members of the committee:

Thank you for your consideration of HB 492 requiring coaches to receive mental health education and preparedness. As a former coach with roughly 20 years of experience coaching both men's and women's sports at all levels youth through collegiate, but more importantly as a father of two young children, I fully support and implore the committee to vote YES on HB 492.

Mental health can have a significant impact on all students, but especially student athletes. Recently, two 5-star athletes Ohio State offensive lineman Harry Miller and gold medalist Simone Biles bravely shared their mental health struggles with the whole world. And although they are elite athletes with an unusual amount of pressure, unfortunately their stories are not unique. Student athletes across all levels of competition are struggling with their mental health and we need to prepare coaches to recognize the signs and know where to turn to get their players the help where and when they need it.

The training for coaches proposed in HB 492 is designed to give them the skills to identify potential red flags in a student athlete's behavior and the resources to assist a student athlete until experts can be notified. The training this bill requires is not designed for coaches to become certified counselors, just as current mandated sports medicine training is not designed to make coaches a medical trainer or doctor.

While I did not have any issues related to mental health in my coaching experiences, I shudder to think what I might have missed and how I could have done better for all my players that are like sons and daughters to me. However, a boy that I coached as a youth, committed suicide in middle school. This boy was a 3-sport athlete and excelled at all of them; he was popular and doing well at school; yet something caused him to commit suicide as an 8<sup>th</sup> grader. His coach at the time was in his early twenties, and while he did an amazing job consoling and supporting the boys after the suicide; what might have happened if he had some sort of training? Would Danny still be here today? I don't know.

What I do know is that we, as a community, have not prepared our coaches for the real-life dangers that they face. HB 492 rectifies that.

We must provide our coaches with the tools to help our student athletes facing these real-life mental health issues. For these reasons I urge you to vote yes on HB 492.

Thank you for your time.

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