

Good morning, thank you for taking the time to listen to my statement regarding House Bill 44

I am an OHSAA official for baseball, volleyball, football and basketball in the Dayton, Ohio region. On the evening of Saturday, August 31, 2019 I was working with my crew as the Umpire at the Roger Bacon vs. Dunbar varsity football game at Welcome Stadium in Dayton, Ohio. During this game, a player disagreed with a call and head butt me on the right side of my face with his helmet on. The police were called and a report was filed. The player was 17 years old, technically a juvenile.

I ended up going to the ER the next day. They ordered CT scans and I was diagnosed with a concussion. Bright lights and sound would make my head pound. After a few weeks I was still having occasional headaches managed with just ibuprofen. I also had sleep, memory, speech and anger issues. I wasn't fully relieved of my symptoms for a couple of months.

Through all of this I missed out on roughly \$2,500 income through work and officiating. I also had to pay all of the medical bills while waiting for insurance to be straightened out. Thankfully, insurance finally reimbursed for all but the deductible but I am still out over \$3,000. The stress of having no income, not providing for my family and wondering how we are going to cover the medical bills was probably the hardest part of this.

Mentally, this whole experience was extremely hard also. I struggled with the decision to stop officiating altogether. Something I have been doing for 20 years, and after one horrible incident I was wondering if I could go back. Especially to football, a sport I love. Now, every time I officiate, I think of this incident. I wonder if something will happen. My wife wonders if something will happen. When I went back to officiating, my wife wanted to attend every event because she was worried. This didn't only happen to me, it happened to both of us.

As an official, and family member of an official, you know there is potential to be injured during a game. You do not think that injury is going to be the result of the deliberate actions of someone though. As officials we expect to be yelled at, our family expects it and you learn to deal with it. You do not expect to be assaulted or threatened. Both of which I believe are happening more lately. I have officiated a basketball game that we had to delay until someone was removed after threatening to come back with a gun and shoot one of my partners. I have now been physically assaulted. There need to be consequences to these actions.

The young man was charged with felonious assault causing serious physical harm. There was a motion filed to transfer him to adult court but that was denied by the judge. Finally, on December 4, 2020 he was found delinquent of felonious assault. On January 28, 2021 he was only sentenced with six months probation. During which he has to attend anger management classes, maintain his employment, and write me an apology letter. I was also awarded \$500 restitution, the maximum in juvenile court, that he has to work off through the system. As of today, I have received nothing. He could have caused so much more damage, even death from this headbutt. There could be long term damage that I will have to face in the future. I firmly believe officials should be given the same protections as teachers, bus drivers, etc. We are paid by the schools, but are not considered employees of the schools and not offered the same protections they are. If there are not more serious consequences people will think actions like this are not a big deal. They can get away with retaliating for a bad call with very little punishment. I believe overall sports will suffer if this is not passed.

Sincerely,  
Scott Bistrek