

Date of Hearing: April 7, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON ARTS, ENTERTAINMENT, SPORTS, AND TOURISM
Christopher M. Ward, Chair
AB 1884 (Hadwick) – As Amended March 19, 2026

SUBJECT: Interscholastic athletics: drug testing: suspensions: nicotine use

SUMMARY: AB 1884 requires the governing boards of school districts to establish drug testing programs for pupils in grades 7 to 12, as part of their policies regarding participation in extracurricular and cocurricular activities. The bill requires programs to include nicotine testing for athletic extracurricular activities, authorizes testing to also include alcohol and other controlled substances, and authorizes testing to apply to other non-athletic extracurricular activities.

Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Requires the governing boards of school districts to adopt, as part of their existing policies on extracurricular and cocurricular activities by pupils in grades 7 to 12, a pupil drug testing program, that must include, at minimum, a nicotine testing program applicable to athletic extracurricular activities.
- 2) Authorizes pupil drug testing programs to also include testing for alcohol and controlled substances, that may also apply to other extracurricular activities.
- 3) Requires the adopted pupil drug testing programs to be random and suspicionless, unless the school has a reasonable suspicion that a pupil used nicotine or, if applicable, alcohol or a controlled substance.
- 4) Requires the adopted pupil drug testing programs to condition the voluntary participation in athletic extracurricular activities, and if applicable, other extracurricular activities, on participation in the pupil drug testing program.
 - a) The school district shall obtain the written consent to participate in the pupil drug testing program from all pupils participating in athletic extracurricular activities, and if applicable, other extracurricular activities, and their parents or guardians.
- 5) Prohibits the results of a pupil drug test from being made available to criminal or juvenile authorities unless compelled by a valid and binding subpoena or other legal process.
 - a) The results shall be made available to the superintendent of the school district or the superintendent's designated representative, the coach of the extracurricular athletic team or, if applicable, the adult leader of the other extracurricular activity, and the parents or other person having legal custody of the pupil, and shall not be made available to any other person.
- 6) Prohibits pupils from participating in athletic extracurricular activities for the remainder of the season upon the third cumulative instance of a positive test for any substance included within the pupil drug testing program.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Requires the governing board of a school district that maintains one or more schools containing grades 7 to 12, to establish a school district policy regarding participation in extracurricular and cocurricular activities by pupils in grades 7 to 12. The criteria, which shall be applied to extracurricular and cocurricular activities, shall ensure that pupil participation is conditioned upon satisfactory educational progress in the previous grading period. (Education Code (EDC) Section 35160.5)
- 2) Defines “extracurricular activity” as a program that has all of the following characteristics:
 - a) The program is supervised or financed by the school district.
 - b) Pupils participating in the program represent the school district.
 - c) Pupils exercise some degree of freedom in either the selection, planning, or control of the program.
 - d) The program includes both preparation for performance and performance before an audience or spectators.
- 3) Defines “cocurricular activity” as a program that may be associated with the curriculum in a regular classroom.
- 4) Defines “satisfactory educational progress” to include, but not necessarily be limited to, both of the following:
 - a) Maintenance of minimum passing grades, which is defined as at least a 2.0 grade point average in all enrolled courses on a 4.0 scale.
 - b) Maintenance of minimum progress toward meeting the high school graduation requirements prescribed by the governing board.
- 5) Allows the governing board of each school district to adopt provisions that would allow a pupil who does not achieve satisfactory educational progress in the previous grading period to remain eligible to participate in extracurricular and cocurricular activities during a probationary period. The probationary period shall not exceed one semester in length, but may be for a shorter period of time, as determined by the governing board of the school district. A pupil who does not achieve satisfactory educational progress during the probationary period shall not be allowed to participate in extracurricular and cocurricular activities in the subsequent grading period.
- 6) Allows the governing board of a school district to impose a more stringent academic standard. If the governing board of a school district imposes a more stringent academic standard, the governing board shall establish the criteria for participation in extracurricular and cocurricular activities at a meeting open to the public.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown. This measure has been keyed fiscal by Legislative Counsel.

COMMENTS:

- 1) Author's statement. According to the author, "As a former Tobacco-Use and Prevention Education Director, I know that nicotine use among young people is rising rapidly, particularly through vaping. It poses serious risks to brain development, physical health, and long-term well-being. Most alarmingly, student athletes have been passing out during athletic activities from vaping and reduced lung capacity. In rural schools, nicotine use is a public health crisis.

"Assembly Bill 1884 takes a non-punitive, commonsense approach by allowing schools to identify students in need of help while ensuring that the response is focused on intervention and support—not penalties. This bill keeps students engaged in school activities while providing schools, parents, and coaches with the tools they need to address this public health crisis."

- 2) Background. Drug testing of middle and high school athletes in the United States emerged in the late 20th century alongside growing concern about youth drug use and high-profile doping scandals in sports. By the 1980s and early 1990s, schools began exploring testing as a deterrent, especially for substances like marijuana, steroids, and other performance-enhancing drugs. The issue quickly raised constitutional questions about student privacy and search rights under the Fourth Amendment, leading to landmark rulings by the Supreme Court of the United States.

In *Vernonia School District v. Acton* (1995), the Court upheld random drug testing for student athletes, reasoning that athletes have a reduced expectation of privacy and that schools have a responsibility to prevent drug-related harm. In the 2002 court decision for the Board of Education of Independent School District No. 92 of Pottawatomie County (Oklahoma). *v. Earls*, the United States Supreme Court held that drug testing of pupils who voluntarily participate in extracurricular activities and random suspicionless drug testing of pupils who voluntarily participate in athletics are consistent with the Fourth Amendment to the United States Constitution and the California Constitution.

Following these decisions, drug testing policies spread, but primarily at the local level rather than through statewide mandates. Organizations like the National Federation of State High School Associations have provided guidance, while medical groups such as the American Academy of Pediatrics have expressed caution, often emphasizing prevention, education, and treatment over punitive measures. As a result, implementation varies widely: some districts adopted random testing programs for athletes and extracurricular participants, while others rejected them due to cost, legal concerns, or community opposition. At the state level, only a few places—such as New Jersey with steroid testing—have pursued more centralized approaches.

Over time, the debate has shifted from legality to effectiveness and equity. Research has produced mixed findings on whether drug testing actually reduces substance use among students, and critics argue that such programs may discourage participation or undermine trust between students and schools. Supporters contend that testing can reinforce drug-free norms and provide a reason for students to refuse peer pressure. Today, drug testing of

student athletes remains legally permissible nationwide but unevenly applied, reflecting broader tensions between student safety, privacy rights, and the role of schools in addressing adolescent behavior.

According to a 2024 California Youth Tobacco Survey, conducted by the Department of Public Health's California Tobacco Prevention Program, which included 105 schools and 16,207 students in grades 8, 10, and 12, fewer than 20% of high school respondents reported ever using tobacco. Active tobacco use among these students was 6.4%. Vapes were identified as the most-used tobacco product, followed by nicotine pouches. The most common reason given for vaping was "to relax or relieve stress and anxiety." When examining changes in tobacco use between 2022 and 2024, use of vapes decreased significantly between 2023 and 2024.¹

- 3) Arguments in opposition. According to the Drug Policy Alliance in opposition, "Despite millions of education dollars diverted to random suspicionless drug testing, this humiliating precondition has not been shown to achieve its purported goals of reducing substance use among students. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the largest professional association of pediatricians in the United States, has opposed school-based drug testing programs, finding a 'lack of evidence for its effectiveness.' The AAP policy statement also cautioned about the 'potential for adverse effects, including decreased participation in sports, breach of confidentiality, increases in use of substances not included on testing panels, and increases in the number of students facing disciplinary action.'

"Drug testing policies that result in suspension or exclusion from extracurricular activities are particularly harmful. Punitive drug testing policies reduce time spent in positive school activities and remove potential support resources, including positive mentors such as coaches, counselors, and faculty advisors. Such policies may also result in many students choosing not to engage in extracurricular activities, which are critically important for social and educational development. Such activities reduce students' experimentation with or regular use of substances and provide connection to supportive communities that have a beneficial impact on health and wellness."

- 4) Double-referral. Should the bill pass from this committee, it will be re-referred to the Assembly Committee on Education.
- 5) Policy considerations. It is the opinion of the committee that policies that would deter students from participating in school affiliated athletic activities should be treated with caution. This bill, that would require all student athletes from 7th grade through high school, as well as their parents, to consent to drug testing for nicotine use as a condition of participation, has a high likelihood of doing that. The bill goes even further beyond that, potentially opening mandatory drug testing to an extensive list of controlled substances, including medications, as listed in Chapter 2 (commencing with Section 11053) of Division 10 of the Health and Safety Code, and potentially including other extracurricular activities such as band and afterschool arts programs.

¹ <https://cyts.rti.org/Content/CYTS-2024-Annual-Report.pdf>

This approach to limiting nicotine use amongst students is far too broad and invasive for the problem it is claiming to address.

6) Prior and related legislation:

- a) AB 1572 (Alanis), of 2026, would require the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) to annually verify the eligibility of its officials to officiate CIF contests by requiring those officials to annually register through a platform. The bill is currently on Assembly Third Reading (Consent).
- b) AB 1626 (Gabriel), of 2026, would require coaches for interscholastic athletic programs at California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) member high schools to complete initial training, and subsequent training every 2 years, that covers specified mental health-related topics. The bill is currently in the Assembly Committee on Arts, Entertainment, Sports, and Tourism.
- c) AB 1665 (Pacheco), of 2026, would enact legislation relating to mental health training for youth sports coaches. This bill is in the Assembly Committee on Education.
- d) AB 1985 (Irwin), of 2026, would be known as Sarah Shulze's Law, and would require the Surgeon General to identify and compile a list of age-appropriate mental health training programs that local educational agencies and post-secondary educational institutions can use to train athletic coaches that meet minimum standards. This bill is currently in the Assembly Committee on Health.
- e) AB 245 (McKinnor), Chapter 422, Statutes of 2023, requires coaches to complete training in CPR, recognizing the signs and symptoms of sudden cardiac arrest, and how to use an automated external defibrillator (AED). It also requires emergency action plans and rehearsal of procedures to be followed in the event of a medical emergency related to athletic program activities.
- f) AB 1327 (Weber), Chapter 172, Statutes of 2023, requires CDE to develop a standardized incident form to track racial discrimination, harassment, or hazing that occurs at high school sporting games or sporting events.
- g) SB 1386 (Vasconcellos), of 2004, would have specified that random drug or alcohol testing of pupils by a school district would have been permitted only under specified conditions, and that non-random drug or alcohol testing would have been permitted only upon a reasonable suspicion of the unlawful use of a controlled substance, or alcohol, by a pupil. The bill was vetoed by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

None on file.

Opposition

Alameda County Office of Education
All of US or None (HQ)

Alliance for Boys and Men of Color
California Youth Defender Center
California Youth Empowerment Network
Courage California
Drug Policy Alliance
Ella Baker Center for Human Rights
Justice2jobs Coalition
LA Defensa
Legal Services for Prisoners With Children
Rubicon Programs
San Quentin Skunkworks

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