

Date of Hearing: April 22, 2025

**ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON ARTS, ENTERTAINMENT, SPORTS, AND TOURISM**

Christopher M. Ward, Chair

AB 749 (McKinnor) – As Amended March 28, 2025

**SUBJECT:** Youth Sports for All Act

**SUMMARY:** This bill would require the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) to establish and convene a Blue Ribbon Commission on the Development of a California Department of Youth Sports or an Equivalent Centralized Entity to conduct a comprehensive study on the need for and feasibility of creating a centralized entity charged with supporting and regulating youth sports.

Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Requires the Secretary of HSS, and other relevant agencies or departments as determined by the secretary, to establish and convene a commission on the Development of a California Department of Youth Sports or an Equivalent Centralized Entity, on or before March 1, 2026.
- 2) Establishes the composition of the commission, which includes a minimum of 16 individuals, with at least eight appointed by HHS, one appointed by the Governor, one appointed by the Governor's Advisory Council on Physical Fitness and Mental Well-Being, and the remaining six appointees from various statewide organizations that operate youth sports
- 3) Requires the commission to conduct a study of youth sports, which must be provided to the Legislature and the Governor by January 1, 2027, including the following:
  - a) An assessment of the need and potential for a centralized entity to improve access to, and involvement in, sports for all youth, regardless of race, income, or geographic location.
  - b) An evaluation of and recommendations for the duties, powers, and responsibilities of a centralized entity.
  - c) A review of, and recommendations for, the costs of creating and sustaining a centralized entity, as well as potential funding including state, federal, private, and philanthropic sources.

**EXISTING LAW:**

- 1) Defines "youth sports organization" as an organization, business, nonprofit entity, or a local governmental agency that sponsors or conducts amateur sports competitions, training, camps, or clubs in which persons 17 years of age or younger participate. (Health and Safety Code (HSC) section 124235)
- 2) Requires a youth sports organization to comply with certain requirements related to athletes suspected of sustaining a concussion or head injury, or who has passed out or fainted, including removal from the athletic activity and a prohibition on returning until he or she is evaluated by a licensed health care provider. Requires youth sports organizations to give both

a concussion and head injury information sheet, and a sudden cardiac arrest information sheet, to each athlete on an annual basis. (HSC 124235)

- 3) Requires each coach, administrator, and referee, umpire, or other game official of the youth sports organization to successfully complete concussion and head injury and sudden cardiac arrest prevention education at least once, either online or in person, before supervising an athlete in an activity of the youth sports organization. (HSC 124235(a)(5))
- 4) Requires “sudden cardiac arrest prevention education and educational materials” and a “sudden cardiac arrest information sheet” to include, at a minimum, information relating to cardiac conditions and their potential consequences, the signs and symptoms of sudden cardiac arrest, best practices for removal of an athlete from an athletic activity after fainting or a suspected cardiac condition is observed, steps for returning an athlete to activity, and what to do in the event of a cardiac emergency, which includes calling 911, performing hands-only CPR, and using an AED if it is available. (HSC 124235(b)(3))
- 5) Establishes the California Youth Football Act, which establishes additional requirements on youth sports organizations that conduct a tackle football program, including requiring a minimum of one certified emergency medical technician, state-licensed paramedic, or higher-level medical professional to be present during all games, and requiring coaches to annually receive first aid, CPR, and AED certification. (HSC 124240-124241(h) and (i))
- 6) Requires, as part of the California Youth Football Act, that at least one independent nonrostered individual, appointed by the youth sports organization, to be present at all practice locations, and requires the individual to hold current certifications in first aid, CPR, AED, and concussion protocols. (HSC 124241(j))
- 7) Requires a school district or charter school that offers any interscholastic athletic program to acquire at least one AED for each school that participates in the program, and encourages the school district or charter school to ensure that the AED is available for the purpose of rendering emergency care or treatment within a recommended three to five minutes of sudden cardiac arrest to pupils, spectators, and any other individuals in attendance at the program’s on-campus activities or events, and to ensure that the AED is available to athletic trainers and coaches and authorized persons at these activities or events. (Education Code (EDC) section 35179.6)
- 8) Requires a person or entity that acquires an AED to comply with all regulations governing the placement of an AED, notify an agent of the local emergency medical services agency of the existence, location, and type of AED acquired, ensure that the AED is maintained and tested according to the operation and maintenance guidelines of the manufacturer, ensure that the AED is tested at least biannually and after each use, ensure that an inspection is made of all AEDs on the premises at least every 90 days for potential issues related to the operability of the device, and ensure that records of the maintenance and testing are maintained. (HSC 1797.196)
- 9) Exempts a person or entity that acquires an AED for emergency use from liability for any civil damages resulting from the use of the AED if the person or entity has complied with the requirements in 8) above. (Civil Code (CIV) section 1714.21(d))

- 10) Exempts any person who, in good faith and not for compensation, renders emergency care or treatment by use of an AED at the scene of an emergency from being liable for any civil damages resulting from any acts or omissions in rendering the emergency care. (CIV 1714.21(b))

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

**COMMENTS:**

- 1) Author's statement. According to the author, "The current youth sports landscape is highly fragmented and unfair. Existing practices, pay-to-play models, a lack of facilities, the absence of statewide coaching and safety standards, hyper-competitive leagues, and inaccessible community-based programs deny every child the opportunity to reap the lifelong benefits of youth sports participation which include positive socioemotional development, community cohesion, mental and physical health, academic success, and overall healthier and stronger communities. AB 749 is a crucial first step towards engaging with experts on the establishment of a centralized entity charged with improving access, involvement, and the sustainability of youth sports across California' leading to healthier and more resilient youth, young adults, and communities."
- 2) Background. California is set to host numerous major sporting events in the coming years, including the NBA All-Star Game (2026), Super Bowl LX (2026), Super Bowl LXI (2027), the FIFA World Cup (2026), and the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games. As California prepares to become the center of the sports and tourism world, the state must examine the status of youth sports throughout the state to ensure that all youth are accessing the powerful benefits of sports, play, and physical activity.

In California, children are experiencing unprecedented health and mental health challenges with limited resources to cope and build resilience. Twelve percent of children in California have a current diagnosis of anxiety, behavioral or conduct problems, depression or other mental health conditions. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) affect nearly two million children in California across socioeconomic lines, putting them at risk for health, behavioral, and learning problems. Mental health disorders contribute an enormous burden on the health and well-being of individuals, families, and society, and have an estimated annual cost of \$247 billion. Additionally, 17% (estimated 6.8 million) of California youth ages 6 to 17 are obese. Finally, the average time spent each day on screens for non-educational reasons is now 5 1/2 hours for tweens and 8 1/2 hours for teens. More screen time can be associated with more severe symptoms of depression, anxiety, inattention and aggression.

Structured sports and physical activities are essential in combating these issues, promoting physical health, enhancing mental well-being, building connections, and fostering life skills such as social-emotional learning. A recent study out of the University of Chicago has also found that school sports participation was significantly associated with academic achievement, positive body-image perceptions, and self-esteem. Despite the demonstrated power of sports participation to change youth trajectories, quality programming and well-trained coaches with a basic understanding of youth development competencies are lacking in youth sports. The current landscape of youth sports denies every child the opportunity to achieve wellness, academic success, and positive socioemotional development. The decline

of structured school-based sports programs, and a pay-to-play community youth sports system is leaving millions of young people on the sidelines or out of the game completely.

The lack of physical activity and access to structured sports disproportionately impacts low-income, youth of color. In addition, important gaps in access to sport and play are most acute for Latinas, Black/African American females, youth with disabilities, and those with annual family incomes of less than \$50,000. Importantly, parents strongly support greater investment in ensuring all youth have opportunities to engage in sports, play and physical activity. There are various positive efforts to promote access to physical activity for California's youth; however, the state lacks a centralized entity and a sustainable framework to ensure fair access to quality sports and physical activity for all children.

Establishing a California Youth Sports Commission or Department would address critical issues affecting youth health and development. Furthermore, AB749 will begin the path forward to ensuring California is a model for the country and broader international community. While the United States does not have a youth sports department or governing entity, a vast majority of countries around the world do. This presents an opportunity for California to lead the nation by demonstrating a commitment to fairness, equality, and positive youth development through the unifying experience of sports.

- 3) Arguments in support. According to the sponsor of the bill, the Play Equity Fund, in support, "Despite our organization's unwavering commitment to ensuring every child has access to quality youth sports and play experiences, the current landscape remains highly fragmented and unfair. The pay-to-play models, lack of facilities, the absence of coaching standards, and inaccessible community sports programs deny every child the opportunity to achieve wellness, academic success, and positive socioemotional development.

"AB 749 requires the California Health and Human Services Agency to establish a Blue-Ribbon Commission to examine the current landscape of youth sports and make recommendations for establishing a centralized entity to ensure fair access to quality sports for all youth in California. Addressing the current youth sports landscape is crucial as research has consistently shown that sports participation and physical activity lead to improved physical health, mental health, and more resilient adolescents and young adults."

- 4) Amendments and policy considerations. Over the years, this Committee has been referred a number of bills that aim to improve the safety of athletes at various levels of competition. This has included legislation requiring coaches and instructors to receive training on CPR, first aid, recognizing the symptoms of heat stroke, and operated an automated external defibrillator (AED), as well as requiring the rehearsal of emergency action plans and how to handle sudden cardiac arrest of a participant.

California law mandates strict protocols to protect youth athletes from head injuries. Any youth sports organization operating on school grounds or in connection with schools must adopt concussion and head injury policies. Athletes suspected of sustaining a concussion must be removed from play and cannot return without medical clearance from a licensed healthcare provider. Further, AB 1 from 2019 established specific safety requirements for youth tackle football programs, including limiting full-contact practices to 30 minutes per day and no more than twice a week, as well as requiring annual physical evaluations for all participants to detect potential health risks.

During the committee's information hearing focused on the safety of youth tackle football in 2023, it was pointed out by panelists that in many instances there is not an oversight entity where parents and participants could report issues to about coaches or leagues failing to follow guidelines established in California law. A centralized entity could improve the coordination of resources, improve accessibility, and standardize best practices to ensure all youth can benefit from the physical, mental, and academic advantages of sports participation and regular physical activity.

5) Prior and related legislation:

- a) AB 310 (Alanis), of 2025, requires youth sports organizations to ensure that its coaches are certified to perform CPR and operate an AED, and that there is a written and well-practiced cardiac emergency response plan. This bill is in the Senate awaiting referral to a policy committee.
- b) AB 1467 (Alanis), Chapter 24, Statutes of 2023 Requires a youth sports organization that elects to offer an athletic program to ensure that by January 1, 2027, its athletes have access to an automated external defibrillator (AED) during any official practice or match.
- c) AB 1 (Cooper), Chapter 158, Statutes of 2019, enacts the California Youth Football Act, which establishes certain requirements on youth football. This includes limiting full-contact practices to 30 minutes per day, and no more than two days per week, and requires an EMT or higher-level medical professional to be present during all games. Additionally, one independent non-rostered individual must be present at all practice locations with the authority to evaluate and remove any youth tackle football participant from practice who exhibits an injury.
- d) AB 379 (Mainschein), Chapter 174, Statutes of 2019, adds "an athlete who has passed out or fainted" to existing law that prohibits an athlete from returning to athletic activity until being evaluated and cleared by a health care provider. Requires the athlete, if the health care provider suspects that the athlete has a cardiac condition that puts the athlete at risk for sudden cardiac arrest or other heart-related issues, to remain under the care of the healthcare provider to pursue follow-up testing until the athlete is cleared to play.
- e) AB 2007 (McCarty), Chapter 516, Statutes of 2016, requires amateur youth sports organizations to adopt concussion treatment and recognition protocols similar to those in existing law for student athletes in 27 designated sports, as specified. Would also require youth sports organizations to develop return-to-play protocols, and provide yearly concussion and head injury information sheets and education, as provided.

**REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

**Support**

Play Equity Fund (Sponsor)  
 Accelerated Results Coaching  
 Access Youth Academy  
 Angel City FC  
 Antelope Valley Partners for Health  
 Beat the Streets Los Angeles

BOSS Inc. (Business of Student Success)  
Boyle Heights Wolfpack Football & Cheer  
Boys & Girls Club of Carson  
Boys & Girls Clubs of West San Gabriel Valley & Eastside  
California Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation & Dance  
Center for Healing & Justice Through Sport  
Change the Tune  
City of San Diego Councilmember Henry L Foster III  
Coaching Kapwa Sports Consultants  
ELLA Sports Foundation (Empowering Leadership in Latina Athletes)  
Eric Paredes Save a Life Foundation  
Girls INC. Of Alameda County  
Harlem Lacrosse, Los Angeles  
Hollenbeck Police Activities League  
Home Field Advantage  
KEEN LA (Kids Enjoy Exercise Now)  
Kinflow  
Los Angeles Rams  
Los Angeles Sparks  
My Yute Soccer  
Natasha Watley Foundation  
Nike INC.  
Oakland Genesis  
Oakland Roots and Soul Sports Club  
P1440 Foundation  
Playworks  
Pools of Hope  
Positive Coaching Alliance  
Professor Hannah Thompson (UC Berkeley School of Public Health)  
Proyecto Pastoral  
Rainbow Labs  
Rose Bowl Aquatics Center  
Sports & Social Change  
Street Soccer USA  
USC Schwarzenegger Institute  
USTA Southern California/ Southern California Tennis Association  
Woodcraft Rangers  
YMCA of Metropolitan Los Angeles

**Opposition**

No opposition on file.

**Analysis Prepared by:** Brian V. Anderson, Jr. / A.,E.,S., & T. / (916) 319-3450