

Date of Hearing: June 13, 2023

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON ARTS, ENTERTAINMENT, SPORTS, AND TOURISM  
Sharon Quirk-Silva, Chair  
SB 486 (Hurtado) – As Amended June 5, 2023

**SENATE VOTE:** 39-0

**SUBJECT:** Interscholastic athletics: California Interscholastic Federation: state football championships: neutral locations

**SUMMARY:** This bill requires the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) to hold all state football championship games at a neutral location that is comparable to the location of all other state championship games.

Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Requires the CIF to hold all state football championship games at a neutral location that is comparable to the location of all other championship games.
- 2) Defines “neutral location” as a venue or site that is not the home ground of either team.
- 3) Adds findings and declarations.

**EXISTING LAW:**

- 1) Provides that the CIF is a voluntary organization that consists of school and school-related personnel with responsibility for administering interscholastic athletic activities in secondary schools. (EDC 33353 (a))
- 2) Specifies the CIF shall report to the appropriate policy committees of the Legislature and the Governor on its evaluation and accountability activities undertaken on or before January 1, 2023, and on or before January 1 every seven years thereafter. This report shall include, but not be limited to, the goals and objectives of the CIF with regard to, and the status of, all of the following:
  - a) The governing structure of the CIF, and the effectiveness of that governance structure in providing leadership for interscholastic athletics in secondary schools.
  - b) Methods to facilitate communication with agencies, organizations, and public entities whose functions and interests interface with the CIF.
  - c) The quality of coaching and officiating, including, but not limited to, professional development for coaches and athletic administrators, and parent education programs.
  - d) Gender equity in interscholastic athletics, including, but not limited to, the number of male and female pupils participating in interscholastic athletics in secondary schools, and action taken by the CIF in order to ensure compliance with Title IX of the federal Education Amendments of 1972. (20 U.S.C. Sec. 1681 et seq.)

- e) Health and safety of pupils, coaches, officials, and spectators.
  - f) The economic viability of interscholastic athletics in secondary schools, including, but not limited to, the promotion and marketing of interscholastic athletics.
  - g) New and continuing programs available to pupil athletes.
  - h) Awareness and understanding of emerging issues related to interscholastic athletics in secondary schools. (33353 (b))
- 3) States, subject to funds being appropriated for this purpose in the annual Budget Act, the CIF is encouraged to establish a statewide panel that includes, at a minimum, the following members: school administrators, school board members, coaches of secondary school athletics, teachers, parents, athletic directors, representatives of higher education, pupils participating in athletics at the secondary school level, and a representative of the State Department of Education. (EDC 35179.2)

**FISCAL EFFECT:** None. This measure is keyed non-fiscal by the Legislative Counsel.

**COMMENTS:**

- 1) Author's statement. According to the author, "California continues to grapple with disparities in the quality and accessibility of opportunities between high-income and low-income schools, particularly when it comes to sports fields and educational facilities. High-income schools typically enjoy the privileges of superior sports infrastructure, modern gymnasiums, and state-of-the-art athletic equipment. In stark contrast, low-income schools often face the grim reality of limited or inadequate sports facilities, which negatively impacting the athletic experiences and opportunities available to their students.

"This economic disparity becomes even more pronounced in high school, as it marks the end of the athletic careers for the majority of students, who may never participate in organized sports again. In early December 2022, CIF organized state championship games, where thirty high school football teams competed. For some athletes, this event represented their final game. However, only schools from the top five divisions were privileged to play at a neutral location with immaculate field conditions, extensive media coverage, and updated facilities. Undoubtedly, these select few schools enjoyed a profoundly positive and memorable experience.

"Conversely, the remaining divisions were not afforded the same level of attention or opportunities. They were deprived of the chance to play in a neutral location, devoid of media coverage, and were relegated to outdated facilities. The conditions under which these games were played varied significantly from the CIF State Championship games hosted by the top divisions. While all winning teams could rightfully claim the title of 'California State Champion,' it was evident that the playing conditions were far from equitable.

"To address this issue, SB 486 has been introduced to ensure that CIF is mandated to hold all State Football Championship games for all divisions at comparable neutral locations. This legislation seeks to level the playing field and provide equal opportunities to all participating schools, regardless of their division or financial resources. By creating a more fair and

inclusive environment, SB 486 aims to enhance the overall experience for student-athletes and promote greater equity in the realm of high school sports.”

- 2) Background. CIF, founded in 1914, is a voluntary organization consisting of 1,615 public, public charter and private high schools that are aligned into ten geographical sections for the purpose of governing education-based athletics in grades 9 through 12.

While each CIF section has autonomy from the state and have their own governance structure, section control and oversight is by school representatives from that geographical region. These representatives include school board members, superintendents, principals, teachers, coaches and athletic directors from each high school who come together to carry out the CIF’s mission that is outlined in the CIF Constitution and Bylaws. The CIF Constitution and Bylaws is the product of the CIF elected representatives who serve on the CIF Federated Council and Executive Committee.

### California Interscholastic Federation



The elected membership of the Federated Council consists of school and district representatives elected from the 10 CIF Sections (see above). State council membership voting is weighted to reflect the number of schools and students served by the respective CIF sections. Additionally, voting members of the Federate Council include: representatives from the California Department of Education; California School Boards Association; Association of California School Administrators; California Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance; California Coaches Association, California Athletic Directors

Association, California Association of Private Schools, California Association of Directors of Activities and California School Superintendents.

The CIF receives no state or federal funding as part of its annual budget and is supported by state championship game receipts (36%), corporate support and sponsorships (35%) and limited membership dues (18%). Local school programs are supported by their school district general fund, game receipts and fundraising by coaches, student-athletes and booster clubs.

3) Football - State Championship Bowl Games v. Regional Championship Games Locations.

According to the CIF’s *Blue Pages*, CIF considers (in no particular order) criteria for divisional placement and hosting of regional games:

- a) Win-Loss Record (Preseason, League, Section Playoffs);
- b) Strength of Schedule (Preseason, League, Section Playoffs);
- c) Head to Head Competition;
- d) Common Opponents;
- e) Opponents Win-Loss Record;
- f) Various rankings may be consulted when placing teams (i.e. ScorebookLive, Cal-Hi Sports, Cal Preps); and
- g) Suitability to represent the State in a Bowl Championship with regards to “Pursuing Victory with Honor” and acceptable standards of sportsmanship.

To qualify, teams must compete and qualify through their respective CIF Section Championships to participate in CIF State/Regional Championships. Only Section Champions are eligible for selection to the CIF State/Regional Football Championship Bowl Games. State/regional championship games are typically played at the field/stadium of the host team. The CIF decides the location of where these games are set.

Since 2015, five Divisions (Open division (teams from any division, any section and regardless of enrollment), 1AA, 1A, 2AA, 2A), play at football stadiums, other than their own high school football stadiums secured by CIF. For the first three years, the state championship bowl games were held at California State University, Sacramento’s Hornet Stadium before being moved to Cerritos College (2018-19), and Saddleback College (2021-22). At the end of the 2022 football season, CIF’s contract with Saddleback College expired. CIF is currently in the process of securing a new venue.

Currently, the remaining ten Divisions (3-AA, 3-A, 4-AA, 4-A, 5-AA, 5-A, 6-AA, 6-A, 7-AA, 7-A) play championship games primarily at the home sites of a competing team. In 2022:

Division	Teams	Location
3-AA	San Jacinto v. Grant	Grant Union High School

3-A	Laguna Hills vs. Bellarmine	San Jose City College
4-AA	Northwood v. Escalon	Escalon High School
4-A	Granada Hills v. San Marin	San Marin High School
5-AA	Muir v. Hughson	Hughson High School
5-A	Shafter v. Orland	Orland High School
6-AA	Classical Academy v. Santa Teresa	Santa Teresa High School
6-A	San Gabriel v. Atascadero	Atascadero High School
7-AA	Pinole Valley v. Mendota	Mendota High School
7-A	Crenshaw vs. Lincoln, San Francisco	Kezar Stadium

- 4) Arguments in Support. According to the City of Shafter, “The City of Shafter is pleased to support SB 486 (Hurtado) which requires CIF to hold all state football championship games for all divisions across the State at neutral locations. In early December 2022, under the rules of the CIF, thirty high school football teams competed in a State Championship game. While all winning teams can equally claim to be a ‘State Champion’ the conditions under which the games were played were less than equal. For teams competing within the first five divisions, their competitions took place at a neutral location - a college football facility - with better field conditions, medical accessibility, seating and sideline and media participation. The remaining CIF State Championship games - made up typically of small and rural schools - were not given the same level of significance or attention. Those games were played under field, visitor and sideline conditions that varied greatly from the other CIF State Championship being played at college facilities.”
- 5) Arguments in opposition. According to CIF, “In December 2022, some State CIF football championship game venues were affected by several historic atmospheric rivers that hit California. As a result, we heard from some member schools that alternate venues, comparable to the football stadiums used for the CIF higher division football championship games, should be selected for all championship games. Over the course of the next several months, the State CIF began meeting with the CIF Section Commissioners, Executive Committee, and staff to discuss the feasibility of hosting all 15 state championship games at comparable and neutral sites... CIF does not object to the intent of SB 486, and we agree that our student-athletes should be able to have similar state championship experiences. As part of our commitment to this goal, the CIF has submitted applications to various community colleges in the state, and it is our intent to use neutral and comparable sites for all state championship football contests in fall 2023, pending obtainability of host sites... We believe the best setting for resolving this matter is through the course already underway by the CIF and that SB 486 is an unnecessary use of state authority.”

- 6) Double-referral. Should this bill pass out of this committee, it will be re-referred to the Assembly Committee on Education.
- 7) Prior and related legislation.
  - a) AB 245 (McKinnor, 2023) revises and recasts requirements of training in cardiopulmonary resuscitation and first aid by, among other things, adding rehearsing the appropriate responses to the signs and symptoms of concussions, heat illness, and cardiac arrest to the training component of that program.
  - b) AB 1327 (Weber, 2023) requires CIF to instead report annually to the appropriate policy committees of the Legislature and the Governor and requires the CIF to develop, in consultation with certain community organizations, a standardized incident form to track hate violence that occurs at high school sporting games or sporting events, and annually post those results on their internet website.
  - c) AB 1653 (Sanchez, 2023) requires a school district or charter school that elects to offer any interscholastic athletic program to include as part of their emergency action plan, procedure in the event a student athlete suffers from a heat stroke.

**REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:****Support**

City of Shafter

**Opposition**

California Interscholastic Federation  
CleanEarth4Kids.org  
Safe Healthy Playing Fields, Inc.

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