

## Testimony to House Education on H.348

H.348 is an act relating to requiring licensed athletic trainers at secondary school athletic events and practices. Over the five years that I was an assistant track and field coach, as well as the many years that I spent in the stands watching my four children play sports, I've observed that high school athletes experience health challenges on a daily basis. At practice, I might have a student who has a muscle strain, a black and blue toe, or pavement scrapes from taking a fall over a set of hurdles. I might see a student who is struggling with undiagnosed sinus pain, a headache, or an earache. Aside from the basics of first aid, CPR, AED usage, and knowing how to stop the bleed, my medical training ends there. Many of these students, particularly those who live in underserved communities or who don't have the necessary family resources such as transportation, do not have access to a medical facility. In a rural school setting, 45 minutes from the nearest hospital, on a dirt road 5 miles out on a cross-country training run, with limited to no cellphone coverage, even an ambulance is beyond reach, and it's up to me to make sure the student-athlete gets medical attention. Much of Vermont faces the same situation, and the situation is only exacerbated by the shortage of EMS personnel in rural towns ; many squads are shortening hours on call in light of this crisis. With a licensed athletic trainer on staff, a high school stands a chance of better protecting their student-athletes from life-long consequences of undiagnosed injuries and life-threatening situations such as sudden cardiac arrest.

Currently, under 16 VSA 1431, a school district is required to have a licensed athletic trainer on site for all collision sports (which are football, hockey, lacrosse, or wrestling) and are encouraged to have a licensed athletic trainer on site for all other contact sports. Many school districts cannot afford and don't have the bandwidth to do this on their own.

H.348 as introduced does not require any one school district to employ a licensed athletic trainer, but it does require the Agency of Education to convene a working group to study the need and available resources for requiring the presence of a licensed athletic trainer at all secondary school athletic events and practices, and furthermore, this working group is directed to explore how those resources could be shared among districts or supervisory unions in a cost-effective manner. As a school board member, I understand budget constraints, and although my goal would be for every secondary school to employ a licensed athletic trainer, I realize that some variation best suited to each SU or SD would likely be the reality, which is why I chose to submit this bill in short form, so this committee could craft better legislation after taking testimony from additional sources. The bill names membership in the working group to consist of the Vermont Principals' Association, the Vermont School Boards Association, the Vermont Superintendents Association, the Vermont National Education Association, and the Vermont State Athletic Directors Association. Additionally, it has come to my attention since this bill was introduced that the Vermont Association of Athletic Trainers was inadvertently left off from this list, and I encourage this committee to include them in the working group membership should you take up this bill. Lastly, I also would like to see a date certain for this report to be submitted to this committee and your Senate counterpart with a recommendation for action.

For additional testimony, I would offer that you hear from my daughter Melissa Hango, who participated in a unique athletic training internship in an underserved urban school district in New Hampshire. During that time, she was essentially the primary care provider for student-athletes who identify as New Americans, experiencing homelessness, emancipated students, and students in the foster care system, all relevant to the student-athlete experience in Vermont. She would also be happy to connect you with the Director of this program to better highlight the myriad responsibilities that encompass the scope of a licensed Athletic Trainer's practice. Thank you for your time and your attention to this important bill.

