



March 9, 2016

The Honorable Mike Pence  
Governor  
State of Indiana  
200 W. Washington Street, Room 206  
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Dear Governor Pence:

Safe Kids Worldwide supports SB234, and strongly encourages you to sign it. One way we can make our young athletes safer in sports is to require their coaches to receive education on how to prevent, identify and respond when athletes display the signs and symptoms of concussion. It was for that reason Safe Kids was supportive of the Student Athletes and Head Injuries Act, which you signed in 2014, requiring coaches to complete a player safety education course with a certification of completion.

Competitive sports play an important role in many of our children's lives. Sports teaches values of responsibility and teamwork, it promotes better cognitive skills, and provides an avenue to secondary education for some kids who otherwise would not have such an opportunity. However, competitive sports activity can also result in serious injuries, and while concussions get the most attention, young athletes can sustain other long-term, serious injuries. Oftentimes they can be prevented.

A survey conducted by Safe Kids Worldwide found that parents rely on coaches to keep their children safe while playing sports. However, in the same study, coaches said they do not have the necessary education to prevent or identify the broad range of injuries in sports, nor did they know where to obtain the education. The gap between what parents assume and coaches know must be resolved. According to a report by the Aspen Institute's "Project Play," there was a 2.6 million decline in young people participating in sports between 2008 and 2013. SB234 will help restore credibility to youth sports fields.

There is also strong value in applying "return to play" protocols to non-school sports programs, expanding the covered sports beyond football and requiring transparency so that parents can know that a coach has received that certified education. We also support the expansion of coach education to include proper equipment fitting, heat emergency preparedness and proper techniques that can prevent injuries. Extending the coverage of the law is another giant step forward.

Safe Kids is a grassroots organization of more than 400 coalitions around the nation. In Indiana, it is led by Safe Kids Indiana and there are 15 coalitions around the state.

Passage of SB234 would lead to the protection of at least another 344,000 kids. The concussion safety protocol would not only protect boys, but girls as well. Studies have shown female athletes experience twice the rate of concussions than males in basketball and soccer. Governor Pence, we applaud Indiana's leadership position in making youth sports safer. We hope that you will sign SB 234.

Sincerely,

