

Nozzolio co-sponsors a bill aimed at concussions

By CHRIS MARQUART Finger Lakes Times
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VARICK — From the beginning, Ray Ciancaglini's vision was to take "Second Impact" beyond the Finger Lakes region.

Already, his message is being heard in Albany.

Sen. Michael Nozzolio, R-54 of Fayette, is among a group of six state senators sponsoring a bill (S.3953) to help Ciancaglini's initiative reach athletes and coaching staffs throughout New York.

The legislation would require all athletes participating in activities sanctioned by the New York State Public High School Athletic Association to forgo any athletic activities for a minimum of 24 hours after a concussion is diagnosed.

"Ray is an outstanding contributor to our community. He cares a lot about fostering athletic competition, but there is a growing phenomenon across the nation," Nozzolio said, referring to concussions and the severity of second-impact injuries. "There needs to be additional rules by the state health and education departments to ensure New York is at the forefront of protecting student-athletes."

"This is such a huge step for what we're trying to do," Ciancaglini said. "To have someone at the state level who understands what we're going for to support us, I couldn't be happier."

In a letter to Ciancaglini last month, Nozzolio wrote that "concussion symptoms often take time to surface, and this legislation will allow for a more thorough evaluation of the young athlete's conditions."

If S.3953 becomes law, students would not be allowed to participate in athletics for at least 24 hours following a blow to the head, even if a trainer or physician has cleared an athlete. A blow to the head would be defined using current medical standards established within professional and college athletics, and by various centers for disease control.

"It's up to the State Health Department to gather that and form regulations," Nozzolio said. "Legislation

will likely have little impact on club sports or recreational programs, but the hope is the pending state policy will be adopted by organizers of those programs.

“We’re not trying to prevent play or stop anything. We are trying to make it safer.”

Nozzolio said there is no clear indication when the bill’s fate will be decided. He said the proposal likely will be tweaked by the state Senate’s health and education committees.

Ciancaglini is confident of its outcome.

“If we truly are putting the best interest of the kids on the front burner, then there’s no reason that I can see why this won’t go through,” Ciancaglini added. “It’s for the kids. I don’t want any of them to miss out on reaching their full potential tomorrow because they were too stubborn or proud today.”

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