

# Alaska State Legislature



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**Senator Kevin Meyer**

Senate District O

## SPONSOR STATEMENT FOR SB 119

*“An Act relating to the licensing of athletic trainers; relating to student participation in interscholastic activities; and providing for an effective date”*

SB 119 would 1) amend current statutes to establish licensing and regulation of athletic trainers in the State of Alaska, 2) fix an issue regarding concussions for student athletes and 3) make participation in interscholastic activities available to a larger number of students who otherwise are not eligible.

- 1) Athletic Trainers are certified, health care professionals who play a significant role in the management, prevention, recognition and rehabilitation of physical injury under the supervision of a licensed physician. As people become increasingly more active, athletic trainers are a vital resource in administering immediate emergency care as well as injury prevention and treatment programs. The National Athletic Trainer's Association (NATA), which was founded in 1950, is the professional membership association for certified athletic trainers. According to NATA, Alaska is one of three states that do not currently license athletic trainers.
- 2) Last year the Legislature passed HB15, which requires a student-athlete suspected of suffering a concussion or brain trauma be removed from play, and not be allowed to return until cleared by a certified qualified individual. This bill would require that practice be included in addition to play. Additionally, since there is no organization in Alaska that “certifies” individuals in the evaluation and management of concussions, this bill eliminates the mandate for certification but retains all of the language for training.
- 3) The National Federation of High School Sports reported in a study, The Case for High School Activities that “students who participate in scholastic sports

programs tend to have higher grade-point averages, better attendance records, lower dropout rates and fewer discipline problems than students generally.” The Federation’s report added that “through participation in scholastic sports programs, students learn teamwork, sportsmanship, winning and losing, the rewards of hard work, self-discipline, build self-confidence, and develop skills to handle competitive situations.” This bill defines the eligibility rules for high school sports programs for student-athletes enrolled full time in an alternative education program, allowing qualified students to participate in interscholastic sports programs offered through the public school system.

SB 119 looks to the safety of physical activity throughout our state by ensuring that athletic trainers are licensed, making it clear that student athletes with concussions should be removed from practice and play, and encouraging more students to participate in interscholastic sports programs.