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## **Capps, Pascrell, Menendez Introduce Bill to Protect Children in Athletics**

*Bicameral SAFEPLAY Act Will Promote Youth Safety in Sports*

Washington – Today, Rep. Lois Capps (CA-24), Rep. Bill Pascrell (NJ-09) and Senator Robert Menendez (D-NJ) introduced the Supporting Athletes, Families and Educators to Protect the Lives of Athletic Youth (SAFE PLAY) Act, a bill that would promote the safety of our young athletes.

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), participation in organized sports has risen to nearly 30 million children across the country. While sports are an important part of a healthy childhood, we've seen a troubling increase in student athletes suffering from sports related injuries including concussions, heat stroke, and even sudden cardiac arrest. Specifically, more than 3.5 million kids under age 14 receive medical treatment for sports injuries each year and children ages 5 to 14 account for nearly 40 percent of all sports-related injuries treated in hospitals.

To address this concerning trend, the SAFE PLAY Act would take a multipronged approach of research, community education, and federal support for school district to adopt best practices to keep kids safe, focusing on several areas, including heat exposure, CPR and AED training, concussion response, and energy drink consumption, to ensure children's safety in athletics and on campus.

**"Our children's safety should be of paramount concern to everyone involved in youth athletics," Capps said. "While it is important to encourage teamwork, competition, and fitness for our youth, it is equally important to provide a safe atmosphere for kids to compete. This common sense legislation will go a long way toward protecting our children. I am honored to introduce this important bill with Rep. Pascrell and Senator Menendez."**

**“As co-founder and co-chair of the Congressional Brain Injury Task Force, I have been working to address concussions and more severe traumatic brain injuries for over 14 years,” said Rep. Pascrell. “I am proud to introduce this more comprehensive sports safety legislation with Senator Menendez and Rep. Capps. If we are to encourage young people to be healthy athletes who embrace ideas like teamwork and doing their best, then this Congress must do everything it can to protect them as they participate in sports.”**

**“The safety of our youth comes first – in school, at home and while participating in extracurricular activities,” Menendez said. “As students play their hearts out on athletic fields, we must do everything in our power to prevent injuries. I am pleased that Reps. Pascrell and Capps joined me on this common-sense legislation to keep our students safe while they stay healthy, competitive and well-rounded by playing sports.”**

**“I am honored to have partnered with Senator Menendez and Representatives Capps and Pascrell on this important legislation that will help to keep our children safe while participating in athletic activities,” said Lisa Yue, Founding Executive Director of the Children's Cardiomyopathy Foundation. “This comprehensive legislation is especially important because it includes provisions for identifying children with life-threatening heart conditions such as cardiomyopathy who may be at risk of sudden cardiac death.”**

**“The National Athletic Trainers’ Association is proud to have worked with Representative Capps in the introduction of the Supporting Athletes, Families, and Educators to Protect the Lives of Athletic Youth (SAFE PLAY) Act,” said NATA President Jim Thornton. “As the leading national organization representing athletic trainers and health professionals that are responsible for the prevention and treatment of injuries to athletes at all levels of sport and play, we applaud Rep. Capps for her leadership on the introduction of this comprehensive legislation to protect youth athletes. We look forward to working with other Members of Congress to build support for this important bill.”**

Specifically, the SAFEPLAY Act would direct the CDC and the Department of Health and Human Services to:

- Recommend guidelines for the development of emergency actions plans for student athletes
- Report to Congress on the number of sports related fatalities and catastrophic injuries and the cause
- Develop and disseminate information about the health risks associated with exposure to excessive heat and humidity, and how to avoid heat-related illness

- Develop information on the ingredients used in energy drinks, potential side effects, and recommend guidelines for the safe use of energy drink consumption by students

The bill would also provide assistance for school districts to:

1. Develop and implement a standard plan for concussion safety and management and set up concussion management teams to respond to incidents on campus.
2. Assist schools in developing and implementing an excessive heat action plan to be used during all school-sponsored athletic activities that occur during periods of excessive heat and humidity
3. Provide access to critical resources to teach students across the country the life-saving skills of cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and how to use automated external defibrillators (AED), efforts included in an earlier Capps bill, the Teaching Children to Save Lives Act.

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