

Massachusetts Special Working Group on Youth Sports
Monday, October 20, 2025

Meeting Minutes

This hybrid meeting of the Special Working Group on Youth Sports (the “Group”) was open to the public and began at approximately 1:00 p.m. at One Federal, Street, Suite 600, Boston, with some participants attending via Microsoft Teams.

1. Roll: Call

Josh Zakim, Chair: x Present Absent

Barry R. Finegold: x Present Absent

Michael Vaughn: x Present Absent

Jose Masso x Present Absent

Ryan C. Fattman: x Present Absent

Marcus S. Vaughn: x Present Absent (arrived at approximately 1:15pm)

John Androlei: x Present Absent

Caitlyn Brennan: x Present Absent

Melissa Hart: x Present Absent

Dr. Patty Raube Keller: x Present Absent

Steph Lewis: x Present Absent

Sarah Wilkinson, DOL Commissioner: x Present Absent

2. Swearing In

- a. Director of Boards and Commissions Alicia DelVento joined the Group virtually to conduct a swearing-in for the present attendees.

3. Introductions

- a. Moderator Sean Pierce led the group through introductions that included name, profession and the best piece of advice he/she has received and how that would inform their participation in the group.

4. Review Requirements of the Legislation

- a. Mr. Pierce described the legislative history that led to the creation of the Special Working Group on Youth Sports as well as the deliverables required of members.

5. Review of Draft Workplan and Timeline

- a. Mr. Pierce reviewed the draft work plan and timeline for the Group, and noted the deadline set in the enabling legislation. A report must be filed to The General

Court and the Massachusetts State Athletic Commission no later than 120 days after the third public hearing; the legislation also mandates that no fewer than three public hearings are held.

- b. The group then discussed the anticipated topics of the report and the possible creation of subcommittees to focus on specific topics, as further outline below.

Money in Sports

Main Points:

Private Equity/ Increase in Costs

Vulnerable Populations and Socioeconomic Barriers

Members With Interest in Subcommittee:

- i. Barry Finegold
- ii. José Massó
- iii. Marcus Vaughn
- iv. John Andreoli
- v. Melissa Hart
- vi. Dr. Patty Raube Keller
- vii. Stephen Lewis (with extra focus on finding resources)

Discussion:

STEPHEN LEWIS brings up the notion that “opportunity” and “access” dwindle when sports become unaffordable for youth. The current “buy in” of youth supports disproportionately affects young talent who lack the financial means to participate.

JOSÉ MASSÓ expresses his concern that as accessibility goes away... sports become more about the dollar sign than the experience of the child.

Children

Main Points:

Mental and Physical Health

Benefits of Sports

Safety and Risks from Overspecializations

Members With Interest:

José Massó

Caitlyn Brennan

Melissa Hart

Barry Finegold

Discussion:

- JOHN ANDREOLI believes in the idea of “one sport per season.” He does not suggest putting a cap on how many sports a child plays, but he does suggest the health of kids would benefit from one sport at a time.

- MICHAEL VAUGHN pushes back on a suggestion, claiming there might be downfalls to this “one sport” idea specifically on female athletes. He asserts that playing multiple sports at a time gets kids out of the house and keeps them physically active and away from overspecialization.
- MELISSA HART talks about how tournament organizers schedule tournaments for youth during their school year which takes kids out of valuable educational time.
- DR. PATTY RAUBE KELLER analogizes her own daughter’s experience, where she is unable to participate in school sports as well as club sports due to club sports being able to schedule at the same time as school practices.

Parents

Main Points:

- Return of Investment (ROI)/ College Expectations
- Keeping up with the Joneses
- Education for parents

Members With Interest:

- José Massó
- Michael Vaughn
- Marcus Vaughn
- John Andreoli
- Caitlyn Brennan
- Melissa Hart
- Sarah Wilkinson
- Barry Finegold

Discussion:

- DR. PATTY RAUBE KELLER suggests instead of “parents” this theme should encompass all adult in youth sports.
- STEPHEN LEWIS spoke of ROI and how it creates a sense of entitlement among parents who drop more money on their kids.
- BARRY FINEGOLD agrees with STEPHEN LEWIS and suggests that there needs to be some kind of consumer protection for parents to know what they are expected to get out of youth sports for their child.
- MELISSA HART encourages the need for parental education in the youth sports world. She suggests that parents should know investment in a 10-year-olds sporting career does not always equal a scholarship.

The State's Role

Main Points:

- Permits and Facilities Ownership
- Education and PSAs
- Investment and Data Collection

Members With Interest:

- Josh Zakim
- Melissa Hart
- Dr. Patty Raube Keller
- Sarah Wilkinson
- Barry Finegold

Discussion:

JOSH ZAKIM expresses the need for accurate and true data collection.

MICHAEL VAUGHN points to the Parks and Recreational department as a good resource to obtain insights about the current climate of youth sports as they are the ones who give permits for field use.

JOSÉ MASSÓ explains how investment in infrastructure (stadiums, training facilities, human capital) will help support youth sports. He talks about removing barriers for youth athletes to flourish such as grants for kids to play sports and a youth sports directory to allow parents to see what is out there for their kid to join.

The Season/ The League

Main Points:

- Minimum standards
- Season Length and Content

Members With Interest:

- Michael Vaughn
- Melissa Hart
- Barry Finegold

Discussion:

SARAH WILKINSON expresses the need for industries to communicate with one another to see what standards are working and which ones are not working across sports.

JOSH ZAKIM supports SARAH WILKINSON and reiterates the need for steady and accurate data.

Coaches

Main Topics:

Minimum standards

Training Requirements, Resources, and Certifications

Members With Interest

José Massó

Barry Finegold

Michael Vaughn

Melissa Hart

Sarah Wilkinson

Discussion:

MICHAEL VAUGHN draws a parallel to his own coaching experience and expresses a need for standardization among coaching certificates. The purpose of doing this would be to streamline adequate coaches while minimizing the burden on coaches.

MICHAEL VAUGHN proposes a central location for coaches to look and see tendencies of problematic parents across different sports and leagues. Also alludes to a current practice in place where kids and teams may be suspended due to the behavior of a parent.

Treatment of Officials

Discussion:

DR. PATTY RAUBE KELLER brings up a potential need to focus on ethical guidelines towards treatment of game-play officials:

CAITLYN BRENNAN seconded this concern but suggests that officials also need to have a standard and be held accountable to their actions during game play.

BARRY FINEGOLD brings up the idea that parents have a sense of entitlement to treat officials poorly due to the amount of money they spend on youth sports. He suggested a connection between treatment of officials and money in sports.

MELISSA HART wants the Working Group to look to see what other states are doing regarding enforcement of misconduct against officials. Mentions pregame announcements as a potential requirement.

Questions and Next Steps:

Mr. Pierce asked the Group if they had any final questions/thoughts.

STEPHEN LEWIS asks, "what does success look like?"

BARRY FINEGOLD reiterates that success is putting in the effort to create a well-rounded and accurate draft that depicts the shortcomings of the current youth athletics climate and suggests probable solutions. Ultimately, he claims “success” would be to have this report filed in legislation and passed.

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 2:50pm.