

Massachusetts Youth Sports Working Group Meeting #2
Meeting Minutes
November 25, 2025
12:00 – 2:00 PM

DOL Deputy Chief of Staff Sean Pierce opened the meeting at 12:09 PM and commenced with the Roll Call:

Member	Appointing Authority	Attendance	
Josh Zakim, Chair	MSAC Chair	X Present	<input type="checkbox"/> Absent
Barry R. Finegold	President of the Senate	X Present	<input type="checkbox"/> Absent
Michael Vaughan	President of the Senate	X Present	<input type="checkbox"/> Absent
Jose Masso	Speaker of the House	X Present	<input type="checkbox"/> Absent
TBD	Speaker of the House	<input type="checkbox"/> Present	<input type="checkbox"/> Absent
Ryan C. Fattman	Senate Minority Leader	<input type="checkbox"/> Present	X Absent
Marcus S. Vaughn	House Minority Leader	<input type="checkbox"/> Present	X Absent
John Andreoli	Governor	X Present	<input type="checkbox"/> Absent
Caitlyn Brennan	Governor	X Present	<input type="checkbox"/> Absent
Melissa Hart	Governor	X Present	<input type="checkbox"/> Absent
Dr. Patty Raube Keller	Governor	X Present	<input type="checkbox"/> Absent
Steph Lewis	Governor	<input type="checkbox"/> Present	X Absent
TBD	Governor	<input type="checkbox"/> Present	<input type="checkbox"/> Absent
Sarah Wilkinson, DOL Commissioner	Governor	X Present	<input type="checkbox"/> Absent

- *Both Senator Ryan Fattman and Steph Lewis were able to join the meeting after Roll Call took place.*

After Roll Call, DOL staff presented the minutes from the previous meeting and the Group voted unanimously to approve them.

Presentation and Question & Answer Session with Professor Dionne Koller

The meeting then began with an introduction, by Commissioner Wilkinson, of Professor Dionne Koller Professor of Law and Director of the Center for Sport and the Law, also the author of 'More Than Play: How Law, Policy and Politics Shape American Youth Sport.'

Professor Koller gave opening remarks as Massachusetts is doing well in Youth Sports in general; ranks high in youth sports participating, and believes the Commonwealth has an opportunity to be a national leader to improve youth sports participation. Truly believes and encouraged the Group to work hard for the wellbeing of children and are putting kids first.

Summary of the Professor's opening remarks: This is a "Children First" issue; Exercise is good for kids, must take into consideration the medical community's opinion and data on overtraining, and negative connotation on some aspects of the culture around children in sports.

Socioeconomic privilege is the problem, rather than youth sports itself. Education based sports programs for women and girls is lacking. Olympic policy change has opened up the conversation and commercially streamlined sports. Be aware of policy changes that "look or feel good."

Questions from the Group:

- Commissioner Sarah Wilkinson: What have other states done that have succeeded or not, regarding Youth Sports safety?
- Koller: The biggest push in policy around youth sports has been concussion statutes.
- Commissioner: This sounds like the opinion is disjointed, what can we do?
- Koller: Many are crossing state lines to play youth sports. Recommendations have been made by officials. The NCAA was stripping NIL rights from athletes. CA passed NIL legislation, becoming a precedent for the rest of the country.
- Dr. Patty Raube Keller: Laws on assault on officials?
- Koller: There have been restrictions on parents in different states. We have current law in different states against assault; there has not been enough specificity for parents' vs officials.
- Zakim: Single most important area of focus for our group?
- Koller: Overly competitive. Market consolidation in sports (rinks, equipment etc.). We do too little to protect children. Including sexual abuse amongst other kinds.

Discussion of and Vote on Subcommittees

Chair Zakim introduces and reviews the proposed subcommittees and their membership. Dr. Keller asks if positions are vacant on the subcommittees, she would like to recommend someone in the field of Youth Sports. DOL Staff mentions that the task force is appointed by the legislature and not the DOL, 2 people are waiting to join but DOL staff will approach if there is an opening.

The topic of NIL in high school was brought up. Members expressed concerned what would happen if NIL money came in high schools and made deals to high school recruits in the Commonwealth. Although it has not come to Massachusetts yet, Senator Finegold reminded members that the focus of the group is Youth Sports, not High School.

Member states: Public and private high schools have done a good job in protecting those kids in those NIL deals, but in the AAU or club space there's very little regulation and might have financial discretion to pay to come or use NIL to incentives a student to come to their schools. Member states it is important to start at the bottom in looking at volleyball buyouts. Chair asks if there's a motion to add NIL as a specific subcommittee charge or will this be on people's radar. Another member online states that it should be added just to have the issue on the radar.

Roll Call Vote Passed – NIL in Youth Sports charge to be added in Parents/Money in Sports/Facilities subcommittee: 8-2 Motion carries.

Roll Call Vote to approve the subcommittee and all charges and task force placement in subcommittees

Motions Carries unanimously

Discussion of and Vote on Workplan

Chair and another member question what a public hearing would look like, A member suggests next meeting should limit to 2 hours, or next meeting should be only in-person or only virtually, Chair should map out timeline for public hearing in advanced, a lot to be done.

Chair states next meeting should be virtual then the following public hearings everyone should make the effort to be in-person the first public hearing and figure out a date and time for the public hearings; a reminder was given that the Group must hold three.

DOL staff open to hosting the public hearings at the DOL and hosting outside of Boston as well. Proposed dates should be voted on next meeting. Member stressed to have a final report by mid-May, we are going to need to have more meeting in that time frame, if you can do 4, 1 hour virtual meetings a month to get the subcommittees work going, then the agencies has to get that report and review all the redline changes for all the reports, hope to set that expectation to get it in by the legislators timeframe. There's a lot of deep conversations to have with these topics, virtual would be ideal if we need to do more work.

Motion to accept proposed timeline as written with additional level of details will be clarified for future subcommittee and task force meetings.

Motion Carries unanimously.

Discussion of One Thing That Members Would Change About Youth Sports

Members shared, that the focus of youth sports is turning into what's good for profit and forgetting what's good for kids, becoming a major business.

Adult behavior across the board, on how adults act at youth sports events and a reporting system towards them if parents act egregious in their conduct.

Pay to play model needs to be addressed as it creates barriers for youth and not realistic expectations.

Adult behavior towards officials, one controllable thing is basic safety certification level at every level like concussion training in a contact sport, tackling standards certificates. Aligning youth sports with education curriculum, and the community around them, if approach from an educational standpoint with a community that cares about them, education of kids' lens. Looking at youth sports as a pathway for their kids and their community. Access and opportunity for all

kids, younger parents should not think their kid is signing a contract at a young age, there are resources for kids that exists but need to be pieced together like the City of Boston does. Mental pressures that youth sports have created, kids should not have the pressure or feel stressed about sports.

A task force member shares what they have seen go on with Child influencers on social media, and how parents are forcing the children to be the breadwinners, but don't fall into the child actor protection laws since they are not acting and are not protected.

Parents must be educated, putting guardrails around money, behavior, time, culture that is pushing the kids on the b team out of sports even if they are not at the highest level and protecting the kids from the pressures of the sport and private industry.

Board Counsel reminds members that Subcommittees cannot discuss substantive issues over email because of open meeting laws; accordingly, substantive work will be done in subcommittee meetings.

Adjournment: 1:24pm