

**Representative Aaron Bernstein
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Pennsylvania House of Representatives**

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**Public, Nonpublic Schools Support Bernstein Bill to Create
Separate Sports Playoff Brackets**

HARRISBURG – Following nearly a year of negotiations led by Rep. Aaron Bernstein (R-Beaver/Butler/Lawrence), historic legislation to create separate state championship brackets for high school sports in Pennsylvania was unveiled Tuesday with support from public and nonpublic school leaders.

The Parity in Interscholastic Athletics Act (House Bill 1600) would change the athletic playoff structure governed by the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association (PIAA) to include a public and nonpublic school champion in team sports facing competitive balance challenges. The two state champions would then meet for a final championship.

The new playoff structure would apply to football, baseball, softball, girls' and boys' basketball, girls' volleyball, and girls' and boys' soccer.

Bernstine said that the path to reaching a legislative compromise was not a quick or easy one, but it was important to have an open dialogue with both sides working together.

“This is the first time in 40 years that both sides have sat down in a non-adversarial setting to resolve these challenges and understand each other’s goals,” Bernstein said. “At the end of the day, everyone was focused on making sure the end result was in the best interest of the students both athletically and academically.”

Leaders from the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference and the public school superintendent-led Pennsylvania Athletic Equity Steering Committee expressed their support for the final legislation.

“House Bill 1600 will bring fairness to all student-athletes across the Commonwealth. We are honored to work with our nonpublic school partners and Rep. Bernstein to improve the scholastic environment for all of our students,” said Leonard Rich and William Hall, state co-coordinators of the Pennsylvania Athletic Equity Steering Committee.

“This legislation is a positive change that will lead to a more predictable, open and beneficial system for student athletes across Pennsylvania,” said Pennsylvania Catholic Conference

Executive Director Eric Failing. “We can’t thank Rep. Bernstine enough for bringing all parties together and for his work on this issue.”

In addition to separate playoff brackets, House Bill 1600 would also make the following changes:

- Eliminate the transfer rule, making a student immediately eligible to play after transferring schools if he or she meets all other eligibility standards. In-season transfer eligibility would be restricted with exceptions granted for certain extenuating circumstances.
- Disqualify a team for PIAA playoffs if it forfeits two or more regular-season games in one season.
- Allow for separate playoff brackets to be used in additional team sports if there are at least 50 public schools and 50 nonpublic schools participating in the sport.
- Increase fairness in the PIAA’s district committees to ensure each district accurately reflects the makeup of schools in that given area.

Act 219 of 1972 amended the Public School Code to allow nonpublic schools to be members of the PIAA, which led to the current combined playoff structure.

For more information on House Bill 1600, visit RepBernstine.com or [Facebook.com/RepBernstine](https://www.facebook.com/RepBernstine).

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