

Date of Hearing: July 12, 2023

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Al Muratsuchi, Chair

SB 486 (Hurtado) – As Amended June 5, 2023

[Note: This bill is double referred to the Assembly Committee on Arts, Entertainment, Sports, and Tourism and was heard by that Committee as it relates to issues under its jurisdiction.]

SENATE VOTE: 39-0

SUBJECT: Interscholastic athletics: California Interscholastic Federation: state football championships: neutral locations

SUMMARY: Requires the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) to hold all state football championship games at a neutral location that is comparable to the location of all other championship games. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Requires the CIF to hold all state football championship games at a neutral location that is comparable to the location of all other championship games.
- 2) Defines “neutral location” to mean a venue or site that is not the home ground of either team.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the CIF as a voluntary organization that consists of school and school-related personnel with responsibility for administering interscholastic athletic activities in secondary schools. (Education Code (EC) 33353 (a))
- 2) Requires the CIF to report to the appropriate policy committees of the Legislature and the Governor on its evaluation and accountability activities undertaken on or before January 1, 2023, and on or before January 1 every seven years thereafter. Requires this report to include, but not be limited to, the goals and objectives of the CIF with regard to, and the status of, all of the following:
 - a) The governing structure of the CIF, and the effectiveness of that governance structure in providing leadership for interscholastic athletics in secondary schools;
 - b) Methods to facilitate communication with agencies, organizations, and public entities whose functions and interests interface with the CIF;
 - c) The quality of coaching and officiating, including, but not limited to, professional development for coaches and athletic administrators, and parent education programs;
 - d) Gender equity in interscholastic athletics, including, but not limited to, the number of male and female pupils participating in interscholastic athletics in secondary schools, and action taken by the CIF in order to ensure compliance with Title IX of the federal Education Amendments of 1972. (20 U.S.C. Sec. 1681 et seq.);
 - e) Health and safety of pupils, coaches, officials, and spectators;

- f) The economic viability of interscholastic athletics in secondary schools, including, but not limited to, the promotion and marketing of interscholastic athletics;
 - g) New and continuing programs available to pupil athletes; and
 - h) Awareness and understanding of emerging issues related to interscholastic athletics in secondary schools. (EC 33353 (b))
- 3) States, subject to funds being appropriated for this purpose in the annual Budget Act, the CIF is encouraged to establish a statewide panel that includes, at a minimum, the following members: school administrators, school board members, coaches of secondary school athletics, teachers, parents, athletic directors, representatives of higher education, pupils participating in athletics at the secondary school level, and a representative of the California Department of Education (CDE). (EC 35179.2)

FISCAL EFFECT: This bill has been keyed non-fiscal by the Office of Legislative Counsel.

COMMENTS:

Need for the bill. The author states, “California continues to grapple with disparities in the quality and accessibility of opportunities between high-income and low-income schools, particularly when it comes to sports fields and educational facilities. High-income schools typically enjoy the privileges of superior sports infrastructure, modern gymnasiums, and state-of-the-art athletic equipment. In stark contrast, low-income schools often face the grim reality of limited or inadequate sports facilities, which negatively impacting the athletic experiences and opportunities available to their students.

This economic disparity becomes even more pronounced in high school, as it marks the end of the athletic careers for the majority of students, who may never participate in organized sports again. In early December 2022, the CIF organized state championship games, where thirty high school football teams competed. For some athletes, this event represented their final game. However, only schools from the top five divisions were privileged to play at a neutral location with immaculate field conditions, extensive media coverage, and updated facilities. Undoubtedly, these select few schools enjoyed a profoundly positive and memorable experience.

Conversely, the remaining divisions were not afforded the same level of attention or opportunities. They were deprived of the chance to play in a neutral location, devoid of media coverage, and were relegated to outdated facilities. The conditions under which these games were played varied significantly from the CIF State Championship games hosted by the top divisions. While all winning teams could rightfully claim the title of ‘California State Champion,’ it was evident that the playing conditions were far from equitable.

To address this issue, SB 486 has been introduced to ensure that the California Interscholastic Federation is mandated to hold all State Football Championship games for all divisions at comparable neutral locations. This legislation seeks to level the playing field and provide equal opportunities to all participating schools, regardless of their division or financial resources. By creating a more fair and inclusive environment, SB 486 aims to enhance the overall experience for student-athletes and promote greater equity in the realm of high school sports.”

Where are state championship games played? Currently, the team sports of girls volleyball, girls basketball, and boys basketball have six championship games that are hosted by CIF at neutral locations. In 2015, the CIF membership decided to expand the number of championship games in the sport of football so that the all section champions were included bringing the total number of games to thirteen (it has since expanded to fifteen games), while recognizing that five of those championships would continue to be played at a neutral location and the remaining games would be played at the site of the designated home team for both logistical and cost-saving reasons. This bill would require that all fifteen championship games for football would be hosted by CIF at neutral locations. It is unclear whether it is feasible to require CIF to contract with community colleges to host all fifteen championships each year. CIF has taken steps to secure such contracts for next school year, but some colleges have indicated that they cannot enter into contracts until this fall. It may be challenging for the CIF to secure comparable locations for all fifteen state football championship games (for example: location, seating capacity, lighting, and quality of the field of play). What if CIF is unable to contract with community colleges for this purpose due to availability? ***The Committee may wish to consider*** whether to require the community colleges to prioritize contracting with CIF to host these championship games at their facilities.

The CIF states in their letter of opposition:

In December 2022, some State CIF football championship game venues were affected by several historic atmospheric rivers that hit California. As a result, we heard from some member schools that alternate venues, comparable to the football stadiums used for the CIF higher division football championship games, should be selected for all championship games. The CIF appreciates the goal of SB 486 to provide comparable venues for our student-athletes competing in State CIF football championships. As we have communicated with the author's staff, the CIF has taken measures, both prior to the introduction of SB 486 and since, to develop a plan for contracting for football venues that will provide comparable championship experiences for all of our championship football teams.

The CIF believes the best setting for resolving this matter is through the process already established internally, and that this bill is an unnecessary use of state authority.

CIF. The CIF was founded in 1914, and is a voluntary organization consisting of 1,615 public, public charter and private high schools that are aligned into ten geographical sections for the purpose of governing education-based athletics in grades 9 through 12. While each CIF section has autonomy from the state and have their own governance structure, section control and oversight is by school representatives from that geographical region. These representatives include school board members, superintendents, principals, teachers, coaches and athletic directors from each high school who come together to carry out the CIF's mission that is outlined in the CIF Constitution and Bylaws. The CIF Constitution and Bylaws is the product of the CIF elected representatives who serve on the CIF Federated Council and Executive Committee.

California Interscholastic Federation



The elected membership of the Federated Council consists of school and district representatives elected from the 10 CIF Sections (see graphic). State council membership voting is weighted to reflect the number of schools and students served by the respective CIF sections. Additionally, voting members of the Federate Council include: representatives from the California Department of Education (CDE); California School Boards Association; Association of California School Administrators; California Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance; California Coaches Association, California Athletic Directors Association, California Association of Private Schools, California Association of Directors of Activities and California School Superintendents.

The CIF receives no state or federal funding as part of its annual budget and is supported by state championship game receipts (36%), corporate support and sponsorships (35%), and limited membership dues (18%). Local school programs are supported by their school district general fund, game receipts and fundraising by coaches, student-athletes and booster clubs.

State Championship Football Bowl Games v. Regional Championship Football Games

Locations. According to the CIF's *Blue Pages*, CIF considers (in no particular order) criteria for divisional placement and hosting of regional games:

- 1) Win-Loss Record (Preseason, League, Section Playoffs);
- 2) Strength of Schedule (Preseason, League, Section Playoffs);
- 3) Head to Head Competition;
- 4) Common Opponents;
- 5) Opponents Win-Loss Record;
- 6) Various rankings may be consulted when placing teams (i.e. ScorebookLive, Cal-Hi Sports, Cal Preps); and
- 7) Suitability to represent the State in a Bowl Championship with regards to "Pursuing Victory with Honor" and acceptable standards of sportsmanship.

To qualify, teams must compete and qualify through their respective CIF Section Championships to participate in CIF State/Regional Championships. Only Section Champions are eligible for selection to the CIF State/Regional Football Championship Bowl Games. State/regional championship games are typically played at the field/stadium of the host team. The CIF decides the location of these games.

Since 2015, five divisions play at football stadiums, other than their own high school football stadiums secured by the CIF. For the first three years, the state championship games were held at California State University, Sacramento's Hornet Stadium before being moved to Cerritos College (2018-19), and Saddleback College (2021-22). At the end of the 2022 football season, the CIF's contract with Saddleback College expired. The CIF is currently in the process of securing a new venue.

Currently, the remaining ten divisions play championship games primarily at local high school fields. In 2022:

Division	Teams	Location
3-AA	San Jacinto v. Grant	Grant Union High School
3-A	Laguna Hills vs. Bellarmine	San Jose City College
4-AA	Northwood v. Escalon	Escalon High School
4-A	Granada Hills v. San Marin	San Marin High School
5-AA	Muir v. Hughson	Hughson High School
5-A	Shafter v. Orland	Orland High School
6-AA	Classical Academy v. Santa Teresa	Santa Teresa High School
6-A	San Gabriel v. Atascadero	Atascadero High School
7-AA	Pinole Valley v. Mendota	Mendota High School
7-A	Crenshaw vs. Lincoln, San Francisco	Kezar Stadium

Committee Amendments. *Staff recommends the bill be amended* to provide flexibility to CIF in situations outside of CIF's control such as natural disasters, emergencies, or facility contracts that are cancelled by the facility, such that without this flexibility, would lead to the cancellation of the game.

Arguments in support. The City of Shafter writes, "In early December 2022, under the rules of the CIF, thirty high school football teams competed in a State Championship game. While all winning teams can equally claim to be a "State Champion: the conditions under which the games were played were less than equal. For teams competing within the first five divisions, their competitions took place at a neutral location - a college football facility - with better field conditions, medical accessibility, seating and sideline and media participation. The remaining CIF State Championship games - made up typically of small and rural schools - were not given the same level of significance or attention. Those games were played under field, visitor and sideline conditions that varied greatly from the other CIF State Championship being played at college facilities."

Arguments in opposition. The CIF writes, "The CIF appreciates the goal of SB 486 to provide comparable venues for our student-athletes competing in State CIF football championships. As we have communicated with the author's staff, the CIF has taken measures, both prior to the introduction of SB 486 and since, to develop a plan for contracting for football venues that will provide comparable championship experiences for all of our championship football teams.

In December 2022, some State CIF football championship game venues were affected by several historic atmospheric rivers that hit California. As a result, we heard from some member schools

that alternate venues, comparable to the football stadiums used for the CIF higher division football championship games, should be selected for all championship games. Over the course of the next several months, the State CIF began meeting with the CIF Section Commissioners, Executive Committee, and staff to discuss the feasibility of hosting all 15 state championship games at comparable and neutral sites. At these meetings, which are open to the public, I am personally on record stating that it is the CIF's intent to implement plans to use neutral and comparable sites for all state championship football contests. Once consensus was reached, the CIF's administrative staff began the process of soliciting additional community college venues that could host our football championship events.

The CIF objects to the state creating a precedent through SB 486 by dictating this level of control over the management of high school athletics. The CIF has a long history of both responding to the concerns of its members and working with the Legislature. We believe the best setting for resolving this matter is through the course already underway by the CIF and that SB 486 is an unnecessary use of state authority.”

Related legislation. AB 245 (McKinnor) of the 2023-24 Session would add to the California High School Coaching Education and Training Program (CHSCTP), by July 1, 2024, training in recognizing and responding to the signs and symptoms of concussions, heart illness, and cardiac arrest.

AB 1327 (Weber) of the 2023-24 Session would require the CDE, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, to develop a standardized incident form to track racial discrimination or harassment that occurs at high school sporting games and events.

AB 1653 (Sanchez) of the 2023-24 Session would require, no later than July 1, 2024, the CIF, in consultation with the CDE, to develop guidelines, procedures, and safety standards for the prevention and management of exertional heat illness; and requires CIF to develop guidelines to identify the environmental conditions at which a school must limit and prohibit practice and play.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

City of Shafter

Opposition

California Interscholastic Federation
Cleaneart4kids.org
Safe Healthy Playing Fields, INC.

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