

Burrillville School Department

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Dear Legislator:

I am writing to express my strong support for the use of additional protective equipment in football—specifically Guardian Caps and Guardian Loops—as an important step toward improving athlete safety in Rhode Island’s youth and high school football programs.

As a longtime football coach and educator here in Rhode Island, the safety and well-being of student-athletes has always been my top priority. Over the past several seasons, our program implemented the use of Guardian Caps and Guardian Loops during preseason practices, in-season practices, and summer training sessions. Prior to introducing this equipment, it was not uncommon for our team to experience three to four concussions during practice. Since adopting these safety measures, we have recorded zero concussions over the past two seasons, during practice.

Our experience reflects what is increasingly being seen across football at many levels of the sport. Additional helmet padding such as Guardian Caps is designed to absorb and dissipate impact forces during contact, while Guardian Loops reinforce proper tackling technique by encouraging players to keep their heads out of tackles. Together, these tools help reduce the types of repetitive impacts that often lead to head injuries.

From a coaching standpoint, the equipment has also improved how we teach safer football. Players adapt quickly, and the added protection allows us to continue teaching proper fundamentals while reinforcing safe habits that will benefit them throughout their playing careers.

Football remains an important opportunity for Rhode Island students to learn teamwork, discipline, leadership, and resilience. By encouraging the adoption of modern safety equipment such as Guardian Caps and Guardian Loops, we can preserve the benefits of the game while reducing risks for the young athletes who participate.

Based on our program’s experience and the measurable reduction in head injuries we have observed, I strongly encourage the Rhode Island General Assembly to support initiatives that promote or require the use of additional protective equipment like Guardian Caps and Guardian Loops in school and youth football programs throughout our state.

Thank you for your time and for your continued commitment to the safety and well-being of Rhode Island’s student-athletes.

Gennaro Ferraro

Gennaro Ferraro; M.Ed.
2024-2025 Burrillville School District Teacher of the Year
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