

Dear Members of the General Assembly,

As a current varsity basketball coach and a former athletic director and RIIL, I can attest that the safety of the officials should be the highest priority. I am writing to express my strong support for legislation S2316 which makes assaulting a sports official at a game, match, or meet a felony.

High school athletics are meant to teach young people valuable life lessons such as teamwork, respect, discipline, and sportsmanship. Officials are a critical part of this environment. They ensure that games are conducted fairly, enforce the rules, and help maintain order on the field or court. Without them, interscholastic sports simply could not function.

Unfortunately, incidents of verbal abuse and even physical assault against officials have become increasingly common across the country. These actions not only threaten the safety of the officials but also send a harmful message to the student-athletes who are watching. When adults lose control and act violently over a youth sporting event, it undermines the very values that interscholastic sports are supposed to promote.

Having been on the sidelines as a coach and overseeing athletic programs as an athletic director, I know how difficult it has become to recruit and retain qualified officials. Many experienced officials are leaving because they no longer feel safe or respected. Strong legal protections are necessary to show that Rhode Island values the individuals who dedicate their time to ensuring that student-athletes can compete.

Passing S2316 would send a clear message that violence against officials will not be tolerated. This law would help deter unacceptable behavior, protect those who serve our schools, and reinforce the principles of respect and sportsmanship that we try to instill in our students. I respectfully urge you to support and pass this legislation

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gregory Kortick', written in a cursive style.

Gregory Kortick
West Warwick
Director of Athletics 2012-2023