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**AG HEALEY HOSTS VIRTUAL CALL-TO-ACTION TO ADDRESS HATE AND
BIAS IN SCHOOL ATHLETICS**

*Partnering with School Leaders to Provide Additional Resources to Help Ensure a Safe and
Healthy Environment for Young People in Massachusetts; In-Person Conference and
Regional Trainings Planned for Later this Year*

BOSTON – In effort to foster diversity, equity, and inclusion in both academic and sports settings, Attorney General Maura Healey today announced she is partnering with state leaders to help prevent and address hate and bias incidents in school athletic programs in Massachusetts.

AG Healey announced the partnership today during a [virtual event called “Addressing Hate & Bias in School Athletics: A Call to Action,”](#) that her office hosted in collaboration with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association, and Massachusetts School Administrators’ Association. The event provided a robust discussion and resources for school administrators, athletic directors, coaches, and referees.

In recent months, a rise in reported hate-based incidents across Massachusetts has presented an acute need and a clear opportunity for school and state leaders to come together and redouble efforts to ensure that schools and athletic programs provide a safe and healthy environment for young people.

As part of the event, AG Healey announced a [new collaborative project](#) to expand programming around preventing and addressing hate and bias incidents in school sports, including an in-person conference planned for the start of the 2022-2023 school year, and regional trainings to be conducted by Northeastern University’s Center for the Study of Sport in Society.

“Sports can be a powerful tool for bringing people together, but in recent months we’ve seen too many examples where the hate and bias that infects so much of our culture has made its way into our locker rooms and onto our playing fields,” said **AG Healey**. “At the end of the day, there is nothing more important than investing in the health and well-being of our young people. I want to thank our partner organizations and school leaders who are ready to build positive change throughout the state.”

“School sports are important to students’ physical and mental health and are a great way to build a sense of community, but only when teams, locker rooms and competitions are safe and welcoming places for everyone,” said **Elementary and Secondary Education Commissioner Jeffrey C. Riley**. “This has been a challenging year in many ways, and I’m glad to see so many leaders convene around this important issue.”

“There is no more important responsibility of our schools than providing a safe and supportive environment for our students to grow as responsible citizens,” said **Tim Piwowar, President of the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents**. “Hate and bias have no place in our schools and community, and it is our collective responsibility to set appropriate expectations for our students.”

“The Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association is positioned to play a significant role in growing the courageous leaders of tomorrow,” said **Robert Baldwin, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association**. “Utilizing interscholastic athletics as a platform that proactively promotes behaviors that instill respect for self, team, opponents, officials, rules and the game itself prioritizes our core responsibility – particularly educational athletics, which includes sportsmanship and diversity, equity, and inclusion.”

Today’s event provided attendees with information on current resources available to schools, including the AG’s new [School Sports Guidance](#). Following today’s event, the AG’s Office and its partnering organizations will host an in-person conference for school administrators, athletic directors, coaches, and referees, including panel discussions and workshops on best practices around creating a positive school environment and reporting hate and bias incidents. In addition, regional trainings across the state will be conducted by Northeastern University’s Center for the Study of Sport in Society to provide more in-depth training and equip school and athletic program leaders with the tools they need to empower and support their students and to prevent and address hate.

“We, at the Northeastern University’s Center for the Study of Sport in Society, applaud Attorney General Maura Healey for her leadership and unwavering commitment to stop the promulgation and proliferation of hate wherever it exists in our Commonwealth and beyond,” said **Dan Lebowitz, Executive Director of The Center for the Study of Sport in Society at Northeastern University**. “Sport is an impact engine of inclusion. It has the power to elevate conversation, inspire individual and collective change agency, and create true, sustainable change. AG Healey, her office, and all the committed stakeholders in this initiative, see and embrace sport as a pathway to positive youth engagement, social-emotional development, and the collective community inherent in teamwork. Hate and hurt have no

place in sport, and we remain grateful to AG Healey for her responsive proactivity in creating such an intentional program of hope and healing. We are honored to contribute and be part of the team.”

For more information on the AG’s project on addressing hate and bias in sports and to sign your school up for upcoming programs and trainings, [click here](#).

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Statements of support

Senator Jason Lewis, Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Education:

“Every student athlete in the Commonwealth should feel safe and supported on their team and in their school, and there should be zero tolerance for any incidents of hate or bias. I appreciate the leadership of Attorney General Healey, Commissioner Riley, and others who have joined together to help amplify this important message.”

Representative Alice H. Peisch, House Chair of the Joint Committee on Education:

“The Commonwealth and the rest of the nation have seen a noticeable increase of racist, homophobic, and antisemitic incidents in school athletics over the last few years. Recent school-based incidents involving hate and bias, both on and off the field, demonstrate that there is still work to be done in strengthening diversity, equity, and inclusion in our education system. Addressing this issue has been a consistent goal of the Legislature, as evidenced by the recent passage of legislation pertaining to genocide education. I am fully supportive of the efforts being undertaken by school administrators, athletic directors, and coaches from across the state, and I look forward to working closely with my legislative colleagues on continuing to prioritize actions to eliminate hate and bias from our schools.”

Tanisha Sullivan, President of NAACP Boston:

“When the NAACP Boston launched Take the Lead with our professional sports teams in 2017, it was with the belief that athletes and the sports community have an important role to play in stomping out hate and bias and promoting the American values of justice and equality. Following that lead, and to build stronger school communities, it is critically important that we invest in education and supports to ensure that our youth athletes and programs are also serving as champions of anti-hate and bias in our school communities.”

Iván Espinoza-Madrigal, Executive Director of Lawyers for Civil Rights:

“We are grateful for the Attorney General’s leadership in ensuring equity and fairness in school athletic programs. Hate and bias have no place in sports.”

Robert Trestan, Anti-Defamation League New England Regional Director

“The need for a statewide call to action to end hate, bias and hazing in youth sports could not be greater. Leadership and education remain the pathway to eliminating hate from the locker rooms, fields, gyms and arenas.”

Patience Crozier, GLBTQ Legal Advocates and Defenders Senior Staff Attorney

“Everyone should have a place in school athletics. Through sports, youth learn essential life skills like teamwork and collaboration and, most importantly, they have fun. LGBTQ students experience high rates of bullying in schools, and this bias-based bullying leads to higher rates of anxiety and depression. Our school communities - coaches, teachers, administrators, adult caregivers, and student-athletes- must work together to foster inclusion and safety in athletics. Too often lately, we’ve heard disturbing reports of anti-LGBTQ and racial bias and bullying in local locker rooms. We're grateful to see this initiative. Together, we can do better, raise awareness, and send a collective message that hate and bias have no place in Massachusetts' school sports.”

Kimm Topping, The Safe Schools Program for LGBTQ Students Program Manager

“We are proud that Massachusetts is a leader in creating safe and supportive school communities for all students, and yet LGBTQ students in our state continue to experience disproportionate risk. We must be intentional in upholding the anti-discrimination policies and best practices that our state has created to protect all students, particularly those experiencing marginalization. We hope that today’s collaboration will ultimately create new resources that will allow districts to be even more proactive in protecting students through training, technical assistance, and ongoing education.”

Anh Vu Sawyer, The Southeast Asian Coalition of Massachusetts Executive Director

“Hate and bias against members of our communities too often spills into our schools and even our school sports teams. We are grateful for the work of the Attorney General’s Office to provide resources to schools and athletic programs to address hate incidents and ensure a supportive and inclusive environment for all kids.”