

Dear North Dakota Legislators:

We oppose Section 12 of Senate Bill 2060, which changes the North Dakota Century Code Section 43-06-16 to state, “A licensed chiropractor practicing in this state may perform a preparticipation evaluation for participation in sports.” Chiropractors do not have the comprehensive medical training to provide the wrap-around care required in a primary care preparticipation evaluation, and the toll to increase the scope of work for chiropractors should not be a child’s life.

A good preparticipation evaluation screens athletes for life-threatening conditions and conditions that may lead to injury or illness. One of the most important components of this exam is screening for heart disease and performing a cardiovascular exam. This identifies factors that may put an athlete at increased risk for sudden cardiac death. Evaluation for risk of heart disease is even more essential in our post-pandemic world, as inflammation of the heart musculature (myocarditis) is a known effect of COVID-19, and can be fatal in even young, healthy, athletes. Chiropractors are not trained to evaluate and manage conditions of the heart.

Beyond heart disease, a good preparticipation physical includes screening for neurologic, musculoskeletal and genetic disorders that may affect an athlete’s ability to safely participate in sports. This is also a time to administer vaccines, screen for mental health disorders, evaluate for risk of concussion, and address the unique concerns of athletes with special needs. For many young, healthy athletes, the only time they see their physicians is during a preparticipation evaluation. We have many examples of patients coming in for a preparticipation evaluation, only to discover that they are behind on vaccinations, suffering from severe depression, or have an unaddressed medical issue such as asthma. These issues can only be adequately addressed in the traditional medical setting, not a chiropractor’s office.

A preparticipation evaluation is best provided by a pediatrician, family physician or specially trained Advanced Practice Provider. For the safety and multifaceted healthcare needs of the children of North Dakota, chiropractors should not perform preparticipation sports physicals.

Sincerely,

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