

2026 -- H 7115

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION -- HEALTH AND SAFETY OF PUPILS

Introduced By: Representatives McNamara, Donovan, Ackerman, Casimiro, Bennett,
Casey, Noret, Read, Paplauskas, and Fascia
Date Introduced: January 15, 2026

Referred To: House Education

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Chapter 16-21 of the General Laws entitled "Health and Safety of Pupils" is
2 hereby amended by adding thereto the following section:

3 **16-21-44. Use of impact-reducing soft-shell helmet covers in interscholastic league**
4 **football.**

5 (a)(1) Recent developments in sports technology have created soft shell helmet covers.

6 (2) These soft shell helmet covers have been shown to reduce the impact of collisions in
7 contact sports by adding a padded, soft-shell layer to the outside of a traditional hard-shelled
8 football helmet.

9 (3) As used in this section, the term "device" shall refer to a soft-shell helmet cover that
10 adds a padded, soft-shell layer to the outside of a traditional football helmet which layers are
11 designed to reduce the impact of collisions to the body and the helmet, and thereby reduce the
12 incidence and minimize the effects of concussions and other trauma to the body.

13 (b)(1) Effective August 1, 2028, every student participating in the sport of football in the
14 Rhode Island interscholastic league shall be required to wear an impact-reducing soft-shell helmet
15 cover device at all times while participating in interscholastic league football games and practices
16 during any time in which a traditional football helmet would be used. The devices shall be
17 furnished by their respective school districts to all students participating in these sports; provided
18 that, a parent, guardian, responsible adult, or a student who is eighteen (18) years of age or older,
19 may elect to opt out the student from wearing these devices for practices or games, or both.

- 1 (2) These devices shall remain the property of the school district at all times.
- 2 (c) The Rhode Island interscholastic league shall promulgate rules, regulations and
- 3 standards regarding the selection and use of these devices.
- 4 (d) The provisions of this section shall apply to all public school districts as well as any
- 5 other school which participates in interscholastic league football.

6 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect on July 1, 2028.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
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RELATING TO EDUCATION -- HEALTH AND SAFETY OF PUPILS

1 This act would mandate the use of a soft-shell helmet cover device that adds a padded, soft-
2 shell layer to the outside of a traditional football helmet, for students participating in Rhode Island
3 interscholastic league football. Provided, a student or their parent or guardian could opt out the
4 student from wearing these devices for practices or games.

5 This act would take effect on July 1, 2028.

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