SENATE, No. 3379

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED JANUARY 28, 2021

Sponsored by:
Senator PATRICK J. DIEGNAN, JR.
District 18 (Middlesex)

SYNOPSIS
“Steven’s Law;” prohibits use of non-wood bats in certain organized games.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT
As introduced.
AN ACT prohibiting the use of non-wood bats in certain organized games, designating the act as “Steven’s Law;” and supplementing Title 5 of the Revised Statutes.

BE IT ENACTED by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:

1. The Legislature finds and declares that:
   a. The hitting of baseballs using non-wood bats may cause a baseball to repel off of a bat at a velocity that exceeds the human reaction time necessary to perceive the ball and properly react;
   b. While the safety hazard presented by non-wood bats is difficult to quantify, it is generally agreed that non-wood bats hit the ball with greater force than wood bats and present a greater risk of injury;
   c. Between 1991 and 2001, 15 players were killed by batted balls from bats determined to be made of non-wood aluminum, composite, or unknown substances, while only two deaths are known to have been caused by bats made from wood;
   d. Steven Domalewski, a 12-year-old pitcher from the Police Athletic League in Wayne, New Jersey, was struck in the chest with a ball hit by a non-wood bat, and suffered a near-fatal disruption of the heart’s electrical system that caused his heart to stop, sending him into a coma; and
   e. It is necessary and proper for the State to intervene to protect the health and safety of its young athletes, and that the benefits associated with a reduced risk of death or serious injury outweigh the costs associated with replacing non-wood bats with wood bats.

2. As used in this act:
   “Minor” means a person who is less than 18 years of age.
   “Non-wood bat” means any non-wood baseball bat including, but not limited to, a bat made of metal, titanium, scandium, aluminum or any other alloy compound, but shall not include any wood, composite, laminated or composite-coated wood bat that shall be approved for play upon verified test data that these bats perform, weigh and are balanced like wood bats.
   “Organized game” means any baseball game organized by or affiliated with: a public or nonpublic school; any nonprofit youth serving organization as defined by section 1 of P.L. 1999, c.432 (C.15A:3A-1), including but not limited to, Little Leagues, Babe Ruth Leagues, Police Athletic Leagues, and the American Legion; a county or municipal recreation department; or the governing body of a county or municipality.

3. It shall be unlawful to use a non-wood bat in any organized game in which minors are participants, excluding those games where one of the teams participating in the game is organized by or
affiliated with a school, nonprofit youth organization, county or
municipal recreation department, or governing body of a county or
municipality outside of this State.

The board of education of a school district, the governing board
or chief school administrator of a nonpublic school, the governing
body of a county or municipality, or the governing body of a
nonprofit youth serving organization shall ensure compliance with
the provisions of this act in any organized game it organizes or is
affiliated with, or in which its team participates.

4. This act shall take effect on the first day of the seventh
month after enactment.

STATEMENT

This bill, designated "Steven's Law," prohibits the use of non-
wood bats in organized baseball games in which minors are
participants.

Over the past three to four decades, non-wood bats have almost
completely replaced wood bats in youth and scholastic baseball and
softball leagues. It is generally accepted that non-wood bats hit the
ball with greater force and velocity than wood bats, thereby
reducing the amount of time a defender has to perceive and properly
react to the ball. Therefore, much concern has been raised over the
health and safety risks posed by the widespread use of non-wood
bats, particularly for children. Many young athletes have been
seriously injured and even killed by batted balls that have been hit
with non-wood bats. Steven Domalewski, a 12-year-old pitcher
from the Police Athletic League of Wayne, New Jersey, suffered a
coma after a batted ball from a non-wood bat struck him in the chest
and caused his heart to stop. In the interest of protecting New
Jersey’s young athletes from the risk of serious injury imposed by
the use of non-wood bats, this bill prohibits the use of non-wood
bats in any organized game in which minors are participants,
excluding those games where one of the participating teams comes
from outside of this State.

The board of education of a school district, the governing board
or chief school administrator of a nonpublic school, the governing
body of a municipality, or the governing body of a nonprofit youth
serving organization would ensure compliance with the provisions
of this bill in any organized game it sponsors or in which its team
participates.