

Memo in Support of Amended Bill A.2162-A (Morelle)

The New York State Public High School Athletic Association (NYSPHSAA) policies for organizing state championship competition is fundamentally flawed and will remain so as long as qualifying events, by design, do not give competitors an equal chance to qualify for state competition. This policy is particularly unjust where competitors are not organized for competition within the common five school population classifications or where there is no statewide standard of measure (like qualifying times) to compensate for the wildly unequal qualifying events.

Historically, and apparently in the interest of fairness, the NYSPHSAA has demonstrated a willingness to make adjustments to qualifying tournaments for state competition for team sports. In Boys Ice Hockey, an additional entry is allowed for the section with greatest number of teams. In football, the two smallest sections (7 & 10) have been merged and a team from a third section (3) was added to the grouping - apparently to even up the competition.

The same can not be said for all the individual sports.

While athletes in individual sports like swimming and track and field still must qualify for state competition through unfair sectional events with disproportionate numbers of competitors, at least in these individual sports additional deserving athletes can qualify for the state championship event by meeting a statewide standard time/distance.

Of the remaining individual sports like, bowling, golf, tennis, and gymnastics - while each section sends the same number of qualifiers to the state tournament regardless of the number of competitors in the section - each section at least gets to send multiple-entries. The multiple-entry format increases participation but the policy still remains unfair in that competitors are not afforded a similar chance to qualify. Take for example golf - a section with 11 schools gets to send 9 golfers to the state tournament while a section eight times bigger, with 77 schools, also gets 9 entries.

But by far, the most unfair policy of all is the NYSPHSAA policy governing the State Wrestling Tournament. There, multiple-entry is not permitted. Only one entry is allowed to advance to state competition regardless of the number of competitors in each section. Additional entries are not allowed regardless of the fact that one section has fifty teams competing while another section has two.

The NYSPHSAA reacted to the initial draft of A.2162 with a negative campaign among school superintendents and athletic directors claiming the legislation would doom high school athletics, harm academic achievement, and impose unbearable costs on school districts.

While these claims are exaggerations, distortions, and outright falsehoods – it seems more prudent at this point to narrow the focus of A.2162 in order to address those sports and athletes most adversely affected by the NYSPHSAA's unfair competition policies.

The amendment would change the bill by affecting only individual sports not included in the NYSPHSAA's five class system or sports absent an "equalizer."

Sports affected by A.2162 would be wrestling, bowling, golf, tennis, and possibly gymnastics.