



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

## New Law Will Better Protect Against and Treat Concussions and Traumatic Brain Injuries

CATHARINE YOUNG August 22, 2014

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*Senator Young's Bill [S.7004-A](#) Signed into Law*

On August 11, 2014, a bill sponsored by Senator Catharine Young (R,C,I-Olean) was signed into law to help raise awareness and treatment for traumatic brain injuries.

Last year, on September 13, 2013, 16-year-old Westfield-Brocton football player Damon Janes collapsed on the field of play and passed away three days later.

The terrible tragedy drew attention to the potentially mortal dangers of traumatic brain injuries and the need to further strengthen and improve how head injuries are treated and managed.

“When Damon Janes tragically passed away last year, his family contacted me about what could be done to protect others from having to endure the same terrible loss. We got right to work improving on current practices and policies. The result is this new law, which is a major step forward in protecting our children and anyone at risk of sustaining a serious head injury.

“I deeply admire the courage of Damon’s mother and father, Penny and Dean, for their dedication to helping protect others from having to go through what they have endured. They have taken the loss of their son and focused their grief in a positive way to help others,” said Senator Young.

At a special one-year memorial event held in Brocton on Sunday, August 24, Damon’s family, friends, and the entire community will gather to honor him and keep his memory alive. The passage of the traumatic brain injury law will be officially announced by Senator Young and Damon’s family will be presented with a special resolution commemorating the life of their amazing son and brother, who had such a positive impact on all those who knew him.

“Too often we have seen tragedies like Damon’s, where the effects of a debilitating concussion or head injury results in lifelong disabilities or even the loss of life. With this new law, we are taking action to ensure traumatic brain injuries are recognized and treated as quickly as possible so tragedies can be avoided,” said Senator Young.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, concussions and traumatic brain injuries affect 1.7 million people every year, with children and adolescents among the most at-risk. While most people make a full recovery, for some, injuries can cause damage that lasts a lifetime or even leads to death. Those most likely to sustain a concussion are children four years old or younger, and teenagers 15 to 19, as well as seniors 65 and older.

Prior to the improvements provided by this legislation, the landmark Concussion Management and Awareness Act (CMAA) was passed in 2011, putting New York at the forefront of this national public health issue. The CMAA set stringent standards on concussion management for students that were widely considered to be the leading guidelines in the country. These standards established a robust set of laws that emphasize proper treatment and return-to-play protocols for children and adolescents who may have suffered a traumatic brain injury while participating in school sports.

With more action still needed to protect young people from the effects of a serious head injury, this new legislation further strengthens the CMAA. Through the creation of a concussion management advisory committee within the State Department of Health's (DOH) Traumatic Brain Injury Services Coordinating Council (TBISCC), this act provides improved recognition, treatment, management, and public awareness of traumatic brain injuries.

The TBISCC was established in 1994 to act as an advisory body to the DOH and is charged with recommending long-range objectives, goals, and priorities, while providing advice on the planning, coordination, and development of needed services related to traumatic brain injuries.

The concussion management advisory committee created by Senator Young's legislation will be composed of 12 experienced experts tasked with finding ways to raise public awareness and provide the public with more information on recognizing and managing concussions and mild traumatic brain injuries. Their recommendations to the TBISCC must take into account the latest scientific and academic advancements in the field of traumatic brain injuries, ensuring State policies remain as up-to-date as possible.

"Recognizing serious head injuries immediately and getting rapid care and treatment to victims will help save lives. So often, every moment is vital to avoiding long-term or permanent damage. With these changes, we are making sure there is as much information available to people as possible, especially those whose work, service, and other activities put them in high-risk environments where head injuries are a danger. They need to know how to recognize the symptoms of a serious injury and how to react.

"This is a significant step forward in making sure another family does not have to go through the tragic loss that Damon Janes' family continues to suffer a year after his passing. Some tragedies will always be unavoidable, but with these changes and the increased public awareness we are generating, I am confident this will go a long way towards keeping our children safer and better guarding against those tragedies that can be avoided," said Senator Young.

For important tips and information on how to recognize and treat a concussion, visit the DOH website at: [www.health.ny.gov/prevention/injury\\_prevention/concussion.htm](http://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/injury_prevention/concussion.htm).

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