

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 30, 2019

President Ryan Ruda
Garden City Community College
801 Campus Dr.
Garden City, KS 67846

Dear President Ruda,

Each year over 30,000 New Jersey high school graduates apply and are accepted to attend colleges and universities around the country. Many are accomplished athletes.

Last July, one of those students, 19 year-old Braeden Bradforth, from Neptune High School, was recruited and received a scholarship to play football at your college in Garden City, KS. On only his second day on campus, after evening football practice Braeden was found unresponsive and he died at the hospital later that evening, having suffered from what an autopsy later revealed to be “exertional heat stroke.”

Eight months after Braeden’s death, his grieving family still has many unanswered questions on the circumstances regarding his passing, and they have not received the sought-for answers from the college—information that any grieving family is entitled to.

In March, Rep. Chris Smith (NJ-04), the Congressman for Braeden’s family, sent a letter requesting an external independent investigation into Braeden’s death. We understand that you are intending to share some information from an internal review the school has already conducted.

Still, today, on behalf of Braeden’s surviving family members and friends from our State, the New Jersey delegation joins in the request for an external, independent investigation into this tragedy. Our New Jersey community mourns Braeden’s untimely death and there are significant unanswered questions. An external, independent investigation offers the only way to assure transparency for investigating the past while looking ahead to prevent future tragedies.

Such an investigation should include, at a minimum, a review of the health and safety practices of the GCCC athletic department and football program, eyewitness accounts of any players, coaches and training staff present when Braeden suffered his heat stroke, and the response of the college’s leadership. In a similar case of the death of another college football player—Jordan McNair—due to heat stroke, the University of Maryland hired a sports medicine consultant to establish a timeline of events on the night of McNair’s heat stroke, to review the school’s protocols for maintaining student-athlete health and safety, and to ascertain whether they were appropriately implemented.

Most regrettably, the Bradforth family's tragedy is not the first of its kind. Exertional heat stroke is one of the top three causes of sudden death in athletes, yet it is *preventable*. We must do all we can to identify and address the signs of this life-threatening medical emergency before it takes another athlete.

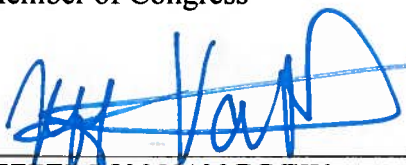
Sincerely,



CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH
Member of Congress



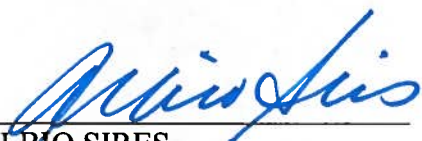
BONNIE WATSON COLEMAN
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