

My name is Joe Tonelli and I am currently the Director of Athletics at Notre Dame High School in West Haven. I have been involved in high school sports as a coach, an official, and an athletic director for 40 years. I am writing in support of HB 5786 – An act concerning assault of a sports official. It is getting increasing more difficult to recruit new officials because of attitude of fans who feel that their admission ticket is a license to abuse officials.

Those involved in high school athletics have witnessed an increase in violence, threatening behavior, and verbal and physical assaults directed towards sports' officials. The time has come to treat these individuals as a protected class when officiating related assaults occur. Getting this law on the books will send a strong message and go a long way in assisting our efforts to inform everyone connected with athletics that officials must be treated with respect, rather than be a target of verbal and physical abuse. Thanks for your support in getting this issue raised and now we have to follow the lead of many other states in enhancing the penalty for an assault against a sports official on account of the performance of their duties. I urge you to support this legislation and thank you for your consideration.

*Respectfully,
Joe Tonelli*