

My apologies for the unexpected emergency that kept me from being there today, but it were unexpected and as long as I get this in by 10am, my understanding is that you will have a chance to read it and consider it.

I have been in sports medicine for over 25 years now, and have covered every sport the State of Ct participates in on a high school level and then some. I have also seen virtually every injury or condition I was trained for, except having to learn how to deliver a baby. I couldn't see how I was ever going to be put in the position of needing to know how to deliver a baby was going to help me, but once I became a trainer, especially at my first job in rural Maine, I realized that while I wasn't the town doctor, I was responsible for all the people that attended the games I covered. I learned that the hard way my first game. The first play of the first game of the season I heard a noise that only sound like one thing if you've ever heard it before, the sound of a leg breaking. As a newbie, in a place that was 50 miles from the closest hospital and my insistence of an ambulance be present before the game began fell on deaf ears because I was assured the volunteer department in town could get an ambulance there within 15 minutes, it was the first and only time I let someone, anyone intimidate me from never starting a game before all necessary back up coverage was present. And many years later, at a school here in CT, the design of the field, a soccer field, wasn't such that in an emergency situation, an ambulance's stretcher could make it on the field and I refuse to let the game start until there was an ambulance present, not SOP for soccer games, but after I pointed out the liability issues it created and God forbid someone were to get injures, need an ambulance and getting the stretcher on the field, the time lost caused a more severe outcome, I would openly testify that in my opinion, we were playing in dangerous conditions, but none that were in the rule book like lightning or heat that I could use to prevent my team from taking the field, but suffice it to say, I got my ambulance.

I tell that story because until very recently, women weren't always taken seriously and as equals on that field. In actuality, we had more power than the coaches because it was our job to say who was eligible to play and who wasn't. This could be a very intimidating situation for a trainer, especially for someone new to the profession or in the position of having to work with a coach or staff member that still thinks a woman doesn't belong on a football field or in the men's locker-room in general, Today, they are few and far between and generally welcome the presence of a trainer, it takes a great deal of pressure of them, as well as liability, but 15 or so years ago, that wasn't always the case. In fact, I was only the second female to travel with a men's team while at UConn. I traveled with the men's ice hockey team and often with the men's baseball team, and in 1986-87, I was cause for discussion, but with the number of women continuing to enter the field of athletic training and being as that was the year they broke ground for the present Gampel Pavilion, the administration understood its initial worries of ultimately protecting the sole female trainer from possible sexual harassment or assault was well intended, but if they knew, at least in my situation, how my players were extremely protective of me and considered me a part of the team. Today, seldom does anyone look twice when the trainer introduces herself to the coach, staff and players.

This person history may seem superfluous, but I assure you that it is relevant because given that my initial experiences on my own as the team's trainer was with men's teams; the "intimidation factor" wasn't ever as issue with me. I may be 5'3" and weigh 100# soaking wet, but I am an excellent trainer who worked very hard to do so, going above and beyond what anyone else I know did, and at no point in my career did anyone ever talk me into returning a player before they were absolutely ready to return to the game. Unfortunately, with things such as full ride scholarships to colleges on the line or even a high school player, rare as it is, going directly from high school to pro, especially in baseball, the team trainer who benches an injures player for whatever reason the same day a scout or recruiter may be in the stands can cause for a great deal of tension, to put it mildly. No trainer I know would let that sway them, but we are now finding out about physicians who, for year, wrote prescriptions for antibiotics to mothers and adult patients who would clearly have a cold or the flu, yet to placate them, they would write

a script for an antibiotic and in 10 days, they would be cured, which they would have been if they simply let the virus take its course. Only now are doctor realizing that not only was it a huge waste of time and money, but caused some bacteria to mutata and subsequently become stronger and drug resistant. So how does SB456 relate to what might seem to be endless rambling of this author, but if you would just bear with me a bit longer, I assure you it will all come together.

Head and spinal cord injuries are the two injuries that can cause catastrophic results, even death, but only head injuries are the ones that can initially come across without symptoms and an athlete could conceivably pass all the present tests we perform now, be sent back in (although the age old "8 day rule" still has it's place), get hit just once and be put into a vegetative state, or even die without this law.

Sports are not just for learning skills and competition, but as I alluded to before, a way to get to college, or off the streets into say a local youth center where they get into boxing for example. These are two excellent examples of how sport are an integral part of our society, but like they rules on clipping because of the risk to the knees or unnecessary roughness, both to help prevent unnecessary and permanent injury, it's time to not only make it a rule, but the law when it comes to head injury and the phenomenon called "Second Impact Syndrome". It's a condition that, when a pre-existing head injury is present, that person sustains another collision injury of minimal force, but when combined, they cause catastrophic results. This law is our best way of ensuring that this doesn't happen. When rules in sports are broken, it's up to the official to determine the penalty, but when a law is broken, it's up to the courts to determine the penalty and I assure you, it won't be a technical foul.

You have the opportunity to protect our most precious resource we have, our children, and I want you to think that the athlete that it might just protect one day is your son or daughter. You see their energy and enthusiasm when they play and if they were to sustain a head injury and have nothing but a slight headache that a couple of Tylenol does take care of, why should you think anything when you say good night to them that night, ask them about their headache, and they tell you they took another does of Tylenol, and are tired, but will probably feel better in the morning. Without this law, you very well could wake up to the greatest tragedy any parent can experience, the death of a child because as a trainer, everything I just described tells a trained person volumes, but tells the layperson, it must not have been that bad. I assure you, there are more lay people out there than trained and with lack of insurance coverage, many of them don't realize that if it happens while playing sports for their school, all of the testing is part of the insurances that all schools must have, so parents don't have to worry about choosing next month's rent or the medical testing their child need to ensure their survival. You all have insurance coverage, but you know the statistics of those who don't and how many of them don't have insurance. I could continue with a number of other examples, but you have, in you hand the ability to pass a law that will protect our kids from the same injuries airbags, bike helmets and not allowing certain sized kids from sitting with those air bags, so if you chose not to pass this law, then I can only assume you don't insist on your kids wearing their helmets while riding their bikes, or their skateboards or while on the slopes. If not, then you know the merits of this bill and why it should proceed to its next step.

Again, I was anguishing, but really looking forward to testifying in person on behalf of this bill. I just hope that this second submission on its behalf does it justice and persuade this committee to do the right thing and vote yes on SB456

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Elena Slesinski