



CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
MARK K. MCQUILLAN
COMMISSIONER



Education Committee
March 17, 2010

Testimony of Mark K. McQuillan, Commissioner of Education

ON

Raised Bill 456: AN ACT CONCERNING STUDENT ATHLETES AND CONCUSSIONS

Raised Bill 456, An Act Concerning Student Athletes and Concussions, seeks to require coaches of intramural and interscholastic athletics to complete annual training regarding the recognition of and dangers associated with concussions. In addition, it requires that student athletes get medical clearance before returning to athletic activity after sustaining a concussion or head injury. The Department strongly supports the issues that this bill seeks to address but has some concerns about the proposal as drafted.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, State Injury Indicators Report – 2005, the highest incidence of hospitalizations due to traumatic brain injury is among the 15-24 age group and the rates of males to sustain a traumatic head injury are more than double than those of females. Certainly the Department has an interest in ensuring the safety of student athletes in this state by requiring that the coaches it certifies complete training regarding the recognition of and dangers associated with concussions.

With that being said, the Department has some concerns about the feasibility of requiring the State Board of Education to develop an initial training course regarding concussions and head injuries by July 1, 2010, especially without any appropriation to do so. The Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference (CIAC) has been actively working with other organizations such as the Connecticut State Medical Society Committee on Sports Medicine (CSMS) in order to develop guidelines on concussion management for schools. In addition, CIAC has representation on the Connecticut Concussion Taskforce at Connecticut Children's Medical Center and they have been working on developing guidelines for "return to play" for middle and high schools. Moreover, we believe the CIAC is the appropriate entity for coordinating the development of this training and refresher course. Therefore, we recommend that the language be revised to require that the governing authority for intramural and interscholastic athletics be called on to develop this training course, in consultation with the Department of Education, an appropriate organization representing licensed athletic trainers, and an organization representing county medical associations.

165 Capitol Avenue • Hartford, Connecticut 06106
Tel: (860) 713-6500 Fax: (860) 713-7001
Email: mark.mcquillan@ct.gov

Lastly, the Department recommends that in Section 2(c) of this bill, which defines “licensed health care professional”, an “athletic trainer licensed pursuant to chapter 375a of the general statutes” be eliminated from this definition. Licensed athletic trainers are not and should not be considered “licensed health care professionals.” Athletic trainers do not have the medical knowledge to determine when it is appropriate for a student suffering from or suspected of suffering from a concussion or other head injury to return to team activities. There are certainly important partners in this initiative and may have an important role in training with their athletic director but should not be considered a health care professional.

Overall, the Department supports this bill and is pleased that action is being taken to address this very important issue.