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Committee on Public Health- Public Hearing Testimony

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My name is Deb Shulansky and I am testifying today in favor of Raised Senate Bill 185: *An Act Concerning Notice to Parents of Student Athletes About Concussions and Head Injuries*, as the Director of Community Outreach and Support at the Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut (BIAC), as a member of the Connecticut Concussion Task Force (CCTF), and as the mother of high school athletes who have sustained several concussions. In fact, one of my daughters has post-concussion syndrome and is currently on medical leave from high school.

In my role at BIAC, I work to increase awareness and understanding of concussion and other brain injuries. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), as many as 3.8 million sports and recreation-related concussions occur in the United States each year. While concussion awareness is increasing, there remains a lack of public understanding of brain injury and its consequences. The only **REAL CURE** for a brain injury is prevention.

Young, developing brains are more sensitive to trauma, and children have weaker necks than adults making brain trauma more damaging. As a result, we have a responsibility to protect our youth from returning to play too soon after sustaining a concussion. Athletes who return to play before their brains heal, experience a slower recovery and are at risk for significant long-term brain impairments. Returning to play before a concussed brain has healed can sometimes cause Second Impact Syndrome, which is characterized by brain swelling, permanent brain damage and even death. The good news is that Second Impact Syndrome can be prevented.

In 2010, this State passed Senate Bill 456: *An Act Concerning Student Athletes and Concussions*. This Legislation gave coaches necessary tools to keep our student athletes safe and it is an important first step in concussion management, however many myths regarding concussive injuries remain. In order to decrease the long-term consequences of undiagnosed and untreated concussion, these myths must be dispelled.

It is **precisely** for this reason that Raised Senate Bill 185 should be passed, since a written statement regarding concussions and head injuries which provides accurate information about the signs and symptoms of concussion for the parents and legal guardians of student athletes, will help to facilitate recognition, proper diagnosis and needed treatment of concussion.

Recognizing and properly responding to a concussion when it first occurs is critical, and the proper management of a concussion is key. However, a coach or athlete may not know right away if the athlete has sustained a concussion, so educating parents about the signs and symptoms of concussion, and knowing when a child should be evaluated by a medical professional, is equally necessary and important.

I urge you to pass Raised Senate Bill 185.

Thank you.