

March 15, 2013

Testimony of Vicky Graham; member, Secondary School Injury Surveillance Work Group

RE: SB 966 *“AN ACT ESTABLISHING A PILOT PROGRAM TO STUDY INJURY RATES IN SCHOOL ATHLETIC PROGRAMS”*

Good morning Senator Gerratana Representative Johnson, and members of the Public Health Committee. I am testifying in support of SB 966, which would establish a pilot secondary school injury surveillance program to collect and study athletic injury data in twenty secondary schools in the state. The program is modeled on an existing asthma program within the Department of Public Health.

For the past year, I've represented the Connecticut Athletic Trainers' Association (CATA) on a multi-disciplinary work group whose goal is to develop a secondary school athletic injury surveillance program in the state. Other members of the work group include representatives of the Connecticut State Medical Society, Medical Aspects of Sport Committee; the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference (CIAC); researchers from the University of Connecticut and Connecticut Children's Medical Center. This group has met in consultation with representatives of the Department of Public Health and State Department of Education, in an effort to identify methods and resources to develop a state secondary school injury surveillance program. I have included the Executive Summary of our proposed injury surveillance program with my written testimony.

An estimated 30 million high school students participate in organized sports; approximately 7.6 million of them in high school sports. Despite the numerous benefits of participation in sports, there is a risk of injury associated such activity. Sports-related injuries in the high school-age group occur more than 2 million times per year, including more than 500,000 physician visits and 30,000 hospitalizations.

There has been an increasing emphasis on athlete safety nationwide, in recent years. The most obvious example of this is that 42 states and the District of Columbia now have concussion laws governing youth and or secondary school sports. Let me be very clear that I am not advocating a legislative fix for issues of athlete safety. In fact, this bill would allow those of us whose responsibility it is to insure the safety of student-athletes on a daily basis to objectively study and identify areas of increased risk to athlete safety, and make evidence-based recommendations to address those risks. By collecting and studying state-specific data, we will be more easily able to recommend appropriate rule

or equipment changes, identify points of emphasis for game officials or coaching techniques, and evaluate the current standard of medical care available to interscholastic student-athletes in Connecticut. The proposed bill would allow the Department of Public Health to accept private funding to assist with implementation of the pilot program. We appreciate the interest in the injury surveillance program the Department of Public Health and State Department of Education have shown over the past year, and are committed to working collaboratively to finding ways to move the pilot study forward. I encourage you to support SB 966. Thank you.

Executive Summary

High School Sport Injury Surveillance Program in Connecticut

September 6, 2012

Each year in the United States approximately 30 million high school student – athletes participate in organized sports, approximately 7.6 million of them in high school sports (Adirim & Cheng, 2003). This involvement carries with it the benefits of keeping these adolescents physically active, involved in a specific activity, as well as the multitude of non-tangible benefits by being involved in a sport with a unified goal. Unfortunately, this participation also brings with it the risk of injury. Sports-related injuries in this group occur more than 2 million times per year including more than 500,000 physician visits and 30,000 hospitalizations (Hill & Andrews, 2011). Many of these injuries are unavoidable, but some estimates are that up to 50% of them may be preventable or at least have their long-term consequences lessened.

High school sports in Connecticut are similarly popular and growing. However, there is no existing sport injury surveillance program to collect information on injuries and the effect they have on young athletes in our state. Each injury occurs to an individual and is specific to him/her. Additionally, each sport and geographic area across the country carries with it unique risks and concerns which place student-athletes at risk of suffering a specific injury or set of injuries. Without a sports injury surveillance program we are unable to make decisions regarding possible interventions or rule changes that will reduce sport injuries. This program is essential in order to protect the health and safety of student-athletes participating in sports in Connecticut.

In order to address this need a multi-disciplinary group has formed to establish such a program in Connecticut. We seek to create a pilot program to collect injuries at a small group of schools over a two-year period to demonstrate feasibility and then expand this program across the state. The proposed study is being sponsored by an experienced group of advisors representing the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference (CIAC), the Connecticut Department of Public Health (CT DPH), the Connecticut Department of Education (CT DEd), the Connecticut State Medical Society (CSMS), the Connecticut Athletic Trainers' Association (CATA), the Connecticut Chapter of American Academy of Family Practice, and Connecticut Children's Medical Center/University of Connecticut School of Medicine.

Adirim, T., & Cheng, T. (2003). Overview of injuries in the young athlete. *Sports Medicine* 33, 75-81.

Hill, D., & Andrews, J. C. (2011). Stopping sports injuries in young athletes. *Clinics in Sports Medicine*, 30, 841-849.

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