BERLIN HIGH SCHOOL
ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT
139 Patterson Way * Berlin, CT 06037

March 8, 2014
Testimony in support of:
House Bill 5486 – AN ACT CONCERNING THE ASSAULT OF A SPORTS OFFICIAL.

My name is Daniel Scavone and I serve as Director of Athletics for the Berlin Public Schools in Berlin, Connecticut. I am also President-Elect of the Connecticut Association of Athletic Directors (CAAD) and a certified basketball official with the International Association of Approved Basketball Officials (IAABO) Board #10, New Haven, Connecticut. I believe my dual role of overseeing the administration of athletic programs as well as officiating basketball games makes me a credible witness in the support of this legislation.

Maintaining good sportsmanship and ensuring the safety of all those involved in an athletic contest is and should be paramount for anyone responsible for sponsoring athletic programs. Unfortunately this has become a daunting task and has posed many challenges for athletic administrators, coaches, and sports officials. Rules are in place that clearly state expectations from players and coaches. Moreover, if these rules are not followed unsportsman-like conduct penalties are enforced and can lead to being removed from the contest. Dealing with unruly spectators is more difficult, especially adult spectators who may be unfamiliar to game operations staff. These fans become very emotional and passionate when watching their kids perform in an athletic contest. From their perspective, they feel there is too much at stake and the need to win and individually perform better than others becomes the driving force to be overly critical of coaches, other players and sports officials. I have witnessed time and time again verbal threats during and after the game that can easily lead to physical confrontations of various levels. Shockingly to me they truly believe they have the right to berate sports officials who are really the only people involved in the contest who are completely objective and have no stake in who wins or loses. This mindset and behavior often trickles down to poor sportsmanship by their children in the game and the cycle of poor sportsmanship becomes more and more difficult to curb.

It has become increasingly difficult to attract and retain sports officials. They play a key role in being the authoritative figure in an athletic contest and have the enormous responsibility to control the game within the rules. When officials are continuously being verbally abused and sometimes threatened, they will often leave the profession of which they make very little money and are really involved for the love of the game and the desire to play a role in the development of student athletes. Legislation such as this would certainly promote the importance of positive behavior by spectators and deter them from potentially crossing the line. I also believe it would send a positive message to all sports officials that they are not only appreciated but their safety is recognized.

Sincerely,
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