

TESTIMONY – Judiciary Committee
March 10, 2014

Good afternoon Senator Coleman, Representative Fox and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee.

My name is Glenn Terlecki and I am a member of the Hartford Chapter of the Connecticut Board of Approved Baseball Umpires. The Hartford Chapter is an association comprised of approximately 180 members that provides quality umpiring services for numerous leagues in over 31 different towns and school districts. My testimony is in favor of:

House Bill No. 5486

“AN ACT CONCERNING THE ASSAULT OF A SPORTING OFFICIAL”

Baseball is no different than most other team sports. It is a game of competition that usually results in a winning and losing team. The competitive spirit is taught at a young age and usually grows more passionate as players, coaches and fans develop from children into adults. Sometimes that competitive spirit crosses the line and manifests itself into behavior that is not only a travesty to the game but also a danger to a sporting official.

As a baseball umpire, it is my goal to officiate every game in the most precise and accurate manner possible. Although most games are completed without incident, split-second decisions occur that can challenge even the most proficient and well trained official. A called 3rd strike, a safe or out call or the judgment of a fair or foul ball can easily be the catalyst for controversy.

Controversy can sometime cause players, coaches and fans to forget that an umpire is a person, but rather view an umpire as a mechanical object that is expected to perform without error and without awareness of ridicule or criticism. Society has long accepted this practice from the ranks of little league to major league baseball. Umpires handle complaints and endure conflict and disputes to ensure that the integrity of the game stays intact. When disputes lead to physical confrontation, the game stops being just a game.

Each year brings more incidents of sporting officials being threatened and assaulted by coaches and fans across the country. These incidents tend not to occur in professional sports but are more typical in amateur games played by children and young adults. It is sadly forgotten that sports are less about competition and more about building character, confidence, courage and teamwork. Players, coaches and fans must always remember that a sport is just a game. Until such time that this occurs, there is a need for statutory penalties to be in place for those who cross the line. Officials are held to a higher standard when officiating a game. Those who choose to assault officials should equally be held to a higher penalty. I ask for your support in passing this important legislation.

Respectfully submitted,

Glenn Terlecki