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Testimony of Representative Paul Davis
House Bill 5486: An Act Concerning the Assault of a Sports Official

Judiciary Committee Public Hearing
March 10, 2014

Senator Coleman, Representative Fox, distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee, I am State Representative Paul Davis of the 117th District and I am here today to testify in support of House Bill 5486: An Act Concerning the Assault of a Sports Official. I have been involved in organized sports at all levels for more than 45 years as both a coach and official. I currently serve as a high school swimming referee. In the past, I served on the Executive Committee of the Connecticut High School Coaches Association and on the CIAC Boys and Girls Swimming Committees as Coaches Chair. I am also a member of the Connecticut Swimming Officials Association and the National Federation of High School Officials Association.

As more and more people watch and participate in various sports, officials who supervise the competition serve an ever-increasing role of importance. In order for participants and spectators to enjoy the competition under the safest conditions, officials must enforce rules in much the same manner that police enforce laws. A knowledgeable and well-trained official can make a major difference in controlling the conditions under which competition takes place. At the same time officials are often physically endangered by the emotional outbursts of athletes, coaches, and (or) spectators at intense competition. Every year the news media offers stories from around the country about officials who were assaulted by individuals participating or watching a competitive event. Injury and even deaths have been recorded. We need to provide our officials with increased protection under the law so that they will feel comfortable in continuing their service. At least twenty states have already passed legislation to protect athletic officials. I believe the time is right for Connecticut to do the same for our people who have taken it upon themselves to provide a fair, safe, and level playing field for our local athletes of all ages.