

Testimony for 5113

Good afternoon Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban, Representative Betts and Senator Linares and the distinguished members of the Children's Committee. For the record, I am Ann Sherwood from Westport, CT and a member of the Parents Concussion Coalition. I am here to testify in support of AN ACT CONCERNING YOUTH ATHLETICS AND CONCUSSIONS.

My son, Luke Foreman, will be testifying about his multiple concussions, missed months of school, and giving up contact sports for life. I am here to stress the importance of passing this legislation to protect our student athletes. Because of Luke's experience I became a "go to" resource in our community who other parents would often call when their child suffered a concussion. I have heard many concussion stories - parents not aware of symptoms or the need for both cognitive and physical rest, athletes not thinking his/her concussion was a big deal and continuing to go to practice, a general lack of understanding of the importance of identifying and properly managing concussions. One doesn't fully realize the importance of education until you've mismanaged an injury. I spread the word as well as I could. Luke did what he could to educate others. But all of our youth need education and protection, which is why we are in front of you today.

Nearly two years ago, I crossed paths with two other mothers in my town whose sons have had life-changing concussions. We saw the glaring need for further protection of our youth. We decided to take action and first encourage our own high school to mandate parent/athlete education and informed consent. While we have a superintendent who was very supportive, no other school in lower Fairfield County was doing this. We knew the state law was not as comprehensive as many other laws and decided we would dedicate our efforts to updating this so all young athletes in the state are better protected.

We are aware that CIAC has announced programs in the last few months to begin requiring athlete and parent education. We commend these actions, although we wish it would've been done a couple of years ago as CT is clearly lagging best practice with over 80% of state laws requiring parent/athlete education. We noticed that policies were being developed as legislation was being drafted. In spite of CIAC's plans to implement an education program, I firmly believe that parent/athlete/official education, along with other important provisions to improve safety, belong in legislation just as much as coach ed does, and for the same reasons - oversight, accountability, consistency. It's also important our state law reflects this practice, which can be a factor in litigation issues.

While there are details that need to be fleshed out and language that needs to be clarified, I hope we can focus on intent of the bill and that you will take it upon yourselves to address the concerns without losing the purpose. Several attempts have been made to update this bill. Many other states have been able to do it, I have trust that CT can as well.

High school and youth athletes are relying on you to provide the safeguards they deserve, and so many other states have already provided. Let's get our law to

represent best practices and even forge ahead to be the model of concussion legislation. Thank you for introducing this legislation and thank you for your time.