

REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 16

BEACON FALLS AND PROSPECT

Woodland Regional High School

Kurt C. Ogren
Principal

Dana M. Mulligan, ED.D.
Assistant Principal

Brian Fell
Assistant Principal
Athletic Director

February 24, 2014

Testimony and Concern Regarding

House Bill 5113 - AN ACT CONCERNING YOUTH ATHLETICS AND CONCUSSIONS

My name is Brian Fell and I am the Athletic Director at Woodland Regional High School in Beacon Falls, serving the towns of Prospect and Beacon Falls. I am also the President of the Connecticut Association of Athletic Directors (CAAD). I have been an Athletic Director for more than 20 years and I am writing this testimony with concerns over House Bill 5113.

As Athletic Directors, student safety is our primary concern. While we applaud the committee's efforts to improve the safety of student-athletes with regard to concussions and other head injuries, we have significant concerns with the means and methods that this bill dictates. Connecticut currently has the most comprehensive and strict rules in the nation for training and treating concussed athletes, and returning them to play. This bill, while well-intended, would make the process cumbersome and costly, while duplicating much of what is currently done under current statutes.

Specifically:

- Having one training course that would be appropriate to students from age seven through high school, as well as parents, is not educationally sound. Schools and municipal programs need to have the flexibility to tailor their training programs to specific audiences as appropriate.
- The proposed consent form would supplant the form which has already been approved by the State Department of Education, Department of Health, Connecticut Medical Society, and the Connecticut Association of Athletic Trainers; and is currently in use in schools.
- Limiting contact hours to 90 minutes per week as written is counter-intuitive and would have an opposite impact on student safety as intended. CIAC regulations are in place to monitor and regulate contact hours in practice to appropriate levels at specific times of the season. We are the only state in the nation to regulate this. Coaches need additional time early in a season to properly teach tackling and blocking techniques, as well as prepare for full game contact through controlled scrimmages. Without the appropriate time needed for these activities, injuries could actually increase.
- Collecting and reporting of data would place additional responsibilities on school staff and may require additional staff. Either way, there would be an increased financial burden on schools.

As Athletic Directors, we are dedicated to student safety, and are proud of the fact that our state has been on the leading edge of concussion management and return-to-play. I believe our current practices regarding concussion education and contact hours are exceptional and are ensuring that our student-athletes are getting a safe and productive experience. Additional or replacement rules would only make our practices overly burdensome without added benefit.

Sincerely,

Brian Fell

Brian Fell,
Athletic Director, Woodland Regional High School
President, Connecticut Association of Athletic Directors