

February 23, 2014

**RE: February 27, 2014: Raised Bill 5113: *An Act Concerning Youth Athletes About Concussions***

Greetings,

My name is Catherine Skarzynski and I am writing in support of this bill. I feel strongly that all stakeholders (coaches, parents, referees, and athletes themselves) in youth sports, not only need to be aware of the latest research on concussions and concussion recovery, but must do as much as possible to prevent concussions.

I am the mother of two children who have had concussions. My son has had two diagnosed concussions, the first was in 2006 and the second one was 15 months ago (and there is a possible one we missed in between). After the last one, he suffered post-concussion syndrome and is still under doctor's care. My son would describe himself as "90-95% of the way back to normal." I truly believe my son's slow recovery was caused by a late diagnosis, as he only had a few minor symptoms initially. Therefore, he did not receive the immediate care necessary which we believe greatly delayed his recovery. My daughter sustained an injury that caused a concussion last week. As a family, we know a great deal more than we did a year ago. In addition, the medical community seems to be slightly more unified and knowledgeable than last year. It is clear that the field of research regarding concussions has expanded rapidly even within the last year. As a result, I feel my daughter will make a full recovery quickly. As my children are both currently in the recovery process, it is yet to be determined if they will return to organized contact sports.

I have done a great deal of reading about concussion research and recovery. What is not mentioned is one point that I believe is missed in young athletes. In my experience, younger

children cannot fully express how they feel after an injury to the head. They either don't have a frame of reference or simply can't explain that they just don't feel like themselves. This, combined with the excitement of play, competition, and peer pressure, can lead to children returning to play too soon. A mild concussions can easily be missed, becoming a much bigger issue if the child returns to play and is injured a second time, as second impact syndrome is much more severe and can take a longer to recover. This is where notification and timing of return to play is important. It is critical that more than one adult who is knowledgeable about concussions is involved in the decision to return to play. In addition, educating students about the symptoms of concussions and their significance will help mitigate many of these challenges. This bill helps ensure that the adults responsible for working with youth sports, as well as the athletes themselves, have the training to possess this information.

I urge you to pass this bill. As the number of concussions seems to be on the rise, please consider the safety of the children of Connecticut. From a parent perspective, concussion is a very scary injury and an even scarier recovery, full of uncertainty. I know if I could prevent even one family from dealing with concussion and post-concussion syndrome, it would be a victory.

Most sincerely,

Catherine Skarzynski

P.S. Ironically I will not be providing testimony in person today as my daughter is on a reduced school schedule due to concussion.