

## Testimony for HB 5113

Good Afternoon Representative Urban, Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Betts and Senator Linares and the distinguished members of the Children's Committee. For the record, I am Chris Coyne from, a student at Yale studying economics and political science. I am here to testify in support of HB 5113, AN ACT CONCERNING YOUTH ATHLETICS AND CONCUSSIONS.

I don't come here today as a doctor, a legislator, or a concussion expert. But rather, I come here today as an example of the flawed system which I grew up in. I accumulated five concussions throughout high school, and one in college; and while many came from games, I did experience at least one concussion during high school football practice.

The fact of the matter is this: there is no denying that subconcussive hits add up over time, and can eventually be the root of lasting brain problems. The issue is that the competitive spirit of athletes and coaches everywhere clouds the better judgment of individuals responsible for limiting contact. The effects of subconcussive hits aside, both coaches and players alike consider there to be a positive relationship with success on the field. Coaches must continue to be successful or lose their job, and players--or for me personally--saw two seasons to build an athletic legacy and earn a chance to continue their careers in college.

With such limited education that youth are getting regarding the dangers of concussions, I believe that many do not understand the serious long-term consequences that can result from accumulating hundreds or thousands of hits to the head over one season. Personally, having never seen any former players

experience serious health issues first hand, I did not believe that long-term harm could be a result. Perhaps continuing to hit my head over and over would lead to minor health defects later in life, but my mind wasn't focused on that at the time. To me, extended contact practice time was like steroids in baseball during the 90s: possible long-term side effects were just a minor inconvenience compared to the temptation of immediate victory. For me, and many others, it was a risk worth taking.

With my experiences in mind, I implore all in attendance today to recognize the need for mandatory education at all levels. Further, I ask you to consider one thing regarding the current 90- minute limit on contact practices: What exactly *is* 90 minutes of contact? Is it running full contact drills from 3:00-4:30? Is it tailored for each player, so that each *individual* gets 90 full minutes? Or will this limit turn into what I think it will be: an assistant coach standing on the field, using a stopwatch to time the length of each play from "hike" to "whistle", so that teams can run full- contact plays for hours, and hours on end before encountering the limit? If I was trying to circumvent the law, this is what I'd do.

In closing, I ask you all to look at the real victims here: the youth. Reporting a head injury is truly a "judgment" call by a teenage kid: if the teen doesn't want to report it, he or she can hide it for as long as they'd like. But the government doesn't let 16 year old kids make the decision to drink alcohol, smoke cigarettes, or even get a tattoo... are we really trusting them to make the right decision regarding their own long term health?

Thank you.