

## Testimony for HB 5113

Good Afternoon Representative Urban, Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Betts, ranking members and all distinguished members of the Children's Committee. My name is Keith Stein from Westport. I am a parent of two boys and a girl who have all played sports each season from pre-school now through high school. I played sports myself through college and have coached youth sports teams in over 20 seasons in girls and boys basketball, baseball, softball and soccer. I have been a board member of our little league for seven years and serve as the league's safety officer. I also am a board member of the Westport Weston Health District. I am here today on behalf of myself as a parent to testify in support of/on HB 5113, AN ACT CONCERNING YOUTH ATHLETICS AND CONCUSSIONS.

I think efforts to improve the education of parents of both high school and all youth league athletics will help improve awareness allowing injuries to be identified more quickly and more often which will minimize the impact on our children. As we all know, the impact of multiple concussions before a child has recovered from an initial one often results in much more severe problems.

From my personal experience as well as those of many of my friends, parents and players often only become properly educated about concussions after they had to deal with one themselves and would have acted much more cautiously if they had obtained some basic knowledge earlier. I get the sense that today more high school parents have some knowledge about the risks of concussions only because by high school they have had a child or one of a close friend who has dealt with a significant injury. If we can mandate basic education for all parents and coaches at the youngest levels, I believe we will be able to reduce the risk of severe injuries resulting from undiagnosed concussions.

Every sport I have been involved in already has preseason meeting(s) educating coaches, as well as officials, on rules and guidelines for the season. It should not be difficult to provide a brief discussion on concussion awareness as well. In Westport, our town mandates that every youth coach complete a short online coaching course on proper behavior through National Alliance for Youth Sports (NAYS - [www.nays.org](http://www.nays.org)) I noticed that that they have a supplemental online concussion course which I tried out. It took me less than 15 minutes and provided decent basic training. As long as the legislation gives youth sports organizations some flexibility to choose and design their own training which should not have to be as comprehensive as the requirement for high school coaches, I don't believe the requirement would be too onerous. I do think that you should make it clear that youth sports coaches only have to complete or update their concussion training once a year since very often the same parents coach several sports in multiple seasons.

Finally, I do support the requirement that coaches at every level have to notify a player's parent within 24 hours if they suspect a child has suffered a concussion (or in fact any injury that prevented the child from continuing to participate.) It is vital that the parent be aware so that they can monitor the child's progress and take action to provide the needed recovery time particularly when many are involved in multiple activities and sports. A few years ago, my daughter suffered a concussion during a travel soccer practice. Luckily the coach was aware enough to have her sit out the remainder of the practice, however he unfortunately never told us that he suspected a concussion and my daughter only casually mentioned that she wasn't feel well that evening. It

wasn't until she told us that her coach made her sit out her next practice later in the week that we were able to piece together that it was a concussion. In the meantime she had continued with all her other activities (instead of immediately taking the necessary rest to recover) which prolonged her recovery. So while it's important that youth coaches are aware of concussions, it's just as important that they immediately share their concerns with parents.

In closing, I applaud your efforts for mandating improved education and communication regarding this important health issue. Many youth sports organizations have taken steps to improve their awareness and response to concussion injuries already but I do think it is important that the state institute sensible minimum requirements for all organizations which will hopefully lead to a consistent and reinforced message to coaches, parents and players. I would encourage that you provide broad enough language particularly at the youth sports level to allow each town the flexibility to design a program that is logistically feasible while still meeting your requirements.

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