

Good Afternoon distinguished members of the Children's Committee. For the record, I am Luke Foreman from Westport, CT. I am here to testify on HB 5113 AN ACT CONCERNING YOUTH ATHLETICS AND CONCUSSIONS.

I'm a senior at Staples High School and I have suffered from two, life-changing concussions. I want to talk from personal experience about the need for parent and athlete education and the need for youth coaches to be trained. My first concussion was my worst. After falling, I didn't have any immediate symptoms - I had a noticeable bump but felt fine otherwise. I went to school and kept playing sports. My parents and I didn't know that concussion symptoms could surface 48 hours after impact. Two days after hitting my head, continuing to go to school and playing sports, I started to feel funny. I was confused about which way to run while I was playing basketball. I took the CMTs and couldn't focus. We didn't immediately relate the symptoms back to hitting my head. About four days after falling, I went to my pediatrician and was told I had a concussion and I should stop playing sports, but could continue my CMT testing at school. This was 6 years ago, before it was well understood that cognitive rest was just as important as physical rest. My symptoms got dramatically worse and at the end of the week I had a CAT scan. My concussion symptoms became very severe and I developed post concussion syndrome and missed three months of school. They were the three worst months of my life.

A year later, during a very competitive soccer practice in a youth league, I was knocked down and accidentally kicked in the head. I was temporarily knocked out, and had to be helped off the field. After sitting out for a while the coach then asked me if I wanted to **go back out on the field**. I felt awful and said I thought I should go home. It wasn't until the coach asked me for my home number and I couldn't recall it, that he realized how concussed I was. Someone finally tracked down my mom who took

me straight to the emergency room and had to help me walk. A youth coach with training wouldn't have asked me if I wanted to go back on the field!

It hope that a law can be passed that would ensure that athletes and parents for both high school and youth leagues, and coaches for youth leagues all be required to learn the signs and symptoms of concussions, and understand the dangers of playing through concussions or not taking time to heal before returning to activity. I feel that if I had been able to identify my first concussion sooner and had physical and cognitive rest, I would not have ended up with post concussion syndrome. After these experiences I made the difficult choice to stop playing contact sports.

I have done what I can to educate others. I have gone to youth leagues to talk about concussions and share my experiences. I have spoken at the Brain Injury Alliance on a panel of athletes and I have shared my experiences at a school nurse's professional development training. I made the case to my high school that they should train their athletes, not just their coaches. CT owes it to their youth to improve their law and make education mandatory and uniform across the state.

Thank you for listening.