

27 February 2014

Testimony 5113

Attn: Members of the Children's Committee

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 Natalie Intemann, from Trumbull, CT. I am here to testify in support of HB 5113, AN ACT CONCERNING YOUTH ATHLETICS AND CONCUSSIONS.

Two years ago, I was diagnosed with a concussion. Two years ago, I spent my days cocooned in my room, shades drawn, noises muffled, medicated to help me manage my pain. A year ago, the lights in this room and the noise of your chairs scraping the floor would cause me to leave these proceedings. Two years ago, on December 1st 2011, my whole life changed.

I am 16 years old and currently a junior in public school in Trumbull, CT. I graduated eighth grade with solid As, dreams of being a Supreme Court Justice and awarded top honors for my class. I was a 14-year old with limitless potential, ready to conquer the world. One day in December brought my life to a halt. I was hit in the head with a volleyball during gym class. From that moment forward, my life and my family's life turned upside down. With only minimal knowledge of concussions and how to recognize symptoms or how to return to learning, I walked blindly into my recovery, led by one specialist or neurologist or by advice from other victims.

At the time of my injury, concussions were widespread in professional sports, but not widely reported. When I was injured, there was a lack of knowledge and lack of strong legislation, both of which could have made a difference in my recovery. PA 10-62, being one of the first concussion laws, is merely an introductory fix on a severe child health issue. In the 2+ years that I have spent recovering from an injury that could have been prevented, legislation was too weak to help other suffering athletes.

Most people are not educated enough on concussion symptoms, return-to-play and return-to-learn protocol, and what to do when athletes show symptoms and signs of a concussion. Reporting a concussion is the first step to a successful recovery but educating parents and athletes can make a difference in recognizing concussive symptoms. Without this bill, students will continue to be led blindly down an unknown path that could ruin their athletic and academic futures.

As a student myself, I recognize that my voice is not always heard clearly by the right people. As a youth, I am relying on adults to make decisions that will keep me safe. By passing this law, our legislature can show investment in the future of Connecticut's children. It is my generation and the generations that come after me that need to be protected. You invest in the brainpower of our country when you support this bill, the exact brainpower that will eventually make decisions for the generations to come. You would not hesitate to protect your own child; please do not hesitate to protect all of us.

Thank you for your generous time and thoughtful consideration in this most critical matter.