

Testimony of the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference On House Bill 5113 *An Act Concerning Youth Athletics and Concussions* and Senate Bill 229 *An Act Concerning Sudden Cardiac Arrest Prevention*

Committee on Children Public Hearing

Thursday, February 27, 2014

Members of the Committee on Children:

My name is Paul Hoey, the associate executive director of the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference (CIAC) which has been the governing body for high school athletics in Connecticut since 1921. CIAC is a subsidiary of the Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS) and our membership includes over 1,000 public and private elementary, middle and high schools in the state. It has come to our attention that considerable misinformation has been circulated about what CAS-CIAC is or is not doing in the area of concussion management. This testimony is to bring the committee up-to-date on what CAS-CIAC is **requiring** of its member schools in the area of concussion management and the association's efforts to reduce sport related injuries in general.

First, let me say that CAS-CIAC fully supports any reasonable effort by any group to assure the health and safety of all of our student athletes. CIAC, throughout its almost one hundred history, has always put the health and safety of its student athletes first and has been proactive in addressing sport related injury issues. For example, CAS-CIAC has implemented the following health and safety requirement for all of our member schools:

- Adopted the Korey Stringer Institutes Recommendation for heat acclimation & heat illness prevention and related practice guidelines and scrimmage regulations which has significantly impacted how early season practices are conducted, especially in football.
- After meeting with the Parents Concussion Coalition in June of 2013 for the first time, CIAC issued a series on advisories to its member schools with recommendations regarding the education of parents and athletes on recognizing the signs and symptoms of concussion, return to play requirements, limiting contact in practice and pool safety requirements to name a few.
- In August of 2013 the CIAC Board of Control began an in-depth discussion on instituting requirements regarding concussion management. After consultation from the Connecticut State Medical Society's Committee on the Medical Aspects of Sports, of which I am a member, the Board began to draft regulations.
- In November 2013, the CIAC Board passed regulations that require all schools to design and implement a program to educate their parents and athletes on the signs and symptoms of concussion and return to play requirements. CIAC has specified what curriculum topics must be covered in each school. Further, CIAC designed an informed consent form to be used by all schools as part of the permission to play process which must be signed by the parent/guardian and athlete. CIAC believes schools should have the autonomy to develop the educational program that best fits their community.
- In January of 2014, the CIAC Board of Control passed a requirement that all officials who work in CIAC member schools be trained in recognizing the signs and symptoms of concussion, as required by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) and, the protocol to follow when an athlete is suspected of being concussed.
- Also in January of 2014, the CIAC Board of Control passed regulations that limit the number of minutes of person-to- person contact that may occur in practice during the pre-season, the competition season and the post season which will take effect with the start of the 2014 spring football season. To our knowledge, Connecticut is among a handful of states that have adopted such regulations and have moved beyond guidelines or recommendations. CIAC limits contact in the pre-season ( three weeks) to a maximum of 120 minutes, to allow for the teaching of the

proper techniques of blocking and tackling to minimize future injury, up to 90 minutes of contact during the regular competition season, and up to 60 minutes of contact during the post season. More detailed information, contact definitions and spring football requirements can be found on the CAS-CIAC web site. Simply visit <http://ciacsports.com> and click on "Sports Medicine/Concussion". The requirements of CIAC are much more specific than the language in the proposed legislation.

- On February 25, 2014 the CIAC football committee changed the format of the football playoff structure to allow for more time between games to minimize injury, as was recommended by the Sports Medicine Committee.

CIAC believes that legislative intervention in athletics at the public school level is not needed given the requirements and changes already being imposed on member schools by CAS-CIAC. The Committee on Children should trust that coaches, athletic directors, principals, and superintendents will fulfill their responsibility to meet the rules regulation of CIAC.

The proposed legislation as written cannot be supported by the membership of CIAC at this time. Further, it is recommended funding be added to support a comprehensive injury surveillance study as was mandated by statute in the last legislative session, but not funded. A study adequately funded would allow for the collection of data by appropriate health care professionals on all sport related injuries including concussions.

CIAC does support efforts to educate coaches and others involved in youth sports but, the proposed legislation will only discourage individuals from volunteering their services given the proposed requirements and possible litigations outlined in the legislation. Further study is needed on youth sports before legislation is considered.

Regarding proposed legislation Senate Bill 229, CIAC does not believe legislation is appropriate at this time. All coaches including interscholastic, intramural, cheer, and dance are required by state law to have a current certificate in CPR and first aid that must be renewed every two years. Short of providing funding for school to have AED's at all practice and game sites, and training coaches and others in diagnosing congenital heart conditions, which is the purview of doctors, we are not sure what else schools and coaches can be required to do. We recommend further study before legislation.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Respectfully,

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