



Trinity College

HARTFORD CONNECTICUT

February 26, 2014

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 Sarah Raskin, from West Hartford, CT. I am here to testify in support of/on HB 5113, AN ACT CONCERNING YOUTH ATHLETICS AND CONCUSSIONS.

I am a neuropsychologist and a professor of Psychology and Neuroscience at Trinity College. My work involves assessment and treatment of people who have had brain injuries, including concussions. I have published several papers and a volume on the treatment of mild brain injuries.

We know so little about the effects of concussion on the brain. We don't yet understand why so many people recover completely and yet some seem to struggle with debilitating symptoms for years. We don't yet know how to accurately diagnose who will have problems. We know even less about how to treat those that do. Most treatments simply involve asking the person to give up activities that are necessary to their daily lives and that bring them enjoyment. When it comes to children, we ask them to miss school which can impact their progress for the rest of their lives.

For these reasons, the only real answer is prevention. Rather than wait for a brain injury to happen we need to do everything we can to protect these children. I certainly understand all the benefits that come from playing sports, physical, social and cognitive benefits. However, none of these outweigh having a lifelong struggle with the deficits brought on by brain damage.

These deficits include trouble learning and remembering, trouble paying attention, trouble thinking and problem-solving. These problems would be difficult for anyone but they are particularly difficult for children. Children are still developing these skills. If that development is interrupted, even for a few months, the effects can be devastating. And because their brains themselves are still developing, this physical development can be impacted.

I strongly urge you to support this bill. It includes an educational component so that parents can make informed choices when signing a child up for a sport. It includes limits on contact time to directly reduce the numbers of injuries. And it includes data collection that can help us in the future decide what steps are really necessary. There are wonderful models already in place in other states and I urge you to look at some of them. One, example, is the school based program <http://brain101.orcasinc.com/>.

Thank you very much for your time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sarah Raskin".

Sarah A. Raskin, Ph.D., ABBP/ABCN