

**Committee on Children Public Hearing  
February 27, 2014**

**Testimony on Raised Bill 5113 –  
AN ACT CONCERNING YOUTH ATHLETICS AND CONCUSSIONS**

Good Afternoon. My name is Wendy Rubin. I am here today representing The Connecticut Recreation and Park Association (CRPA). I am a member of the CRPA Legislative Committee and also the Director of Parks and Recreation for the Town of Coventry.

The CRPA is a nonprofit charitable organization whose mission is to provide a network of support to our members through professional development and resources in order to enhance the quality of recreation and parks services in Connecticut. CRPA represents 600 individual professionals from municipal, nonprofit and private, park, recreation & camp organizations, as well as 128 of the 169 municipal park and recreation departments in Connecticut.

**While CRPA supports the intent of Raised Bill 5113, to safeguard Connecticut's children from possible concussions, we cannot support the bill as written.**

First, inasmuch as HB 5113 treats youth sports the same as interscholastic sports; it fails to recognize important differences. Municipal park and recreation departments and nonprofit sports leagues do not have the funding and resources that interscholastic programs have. Youth athletics are governed by a multitude of national and local governing bodies whereas interscholastic sports in Connecticut are governed by one body. This makes it much more difficult to provide oversight to each of these organizations, many of which municipalities do not directly oversee. Under HB 5113, the administrative resources required to verify the training of coaches, the collection of parental consent forms, and finally the verification of physician consent to return to play is unrealistic.




Youth sports depend upon volunteer coaches, many of which are parents/guardians of children in such programs. While CRPA supports the need to train and educate our coaches, HB 5113 puts too much pressure on these volunteers and opens them to personal liability; more specifically the expectation for volunteers to accurately identify "signs, symptoms, or behavior consistent with a concussion or other brain injury". This fact, along with the civil consequences outlined in section 4 subsection (h), will ultimately deplete our pool of volunteers and reduce the amount of youth sports programming.

Further, youth sports are also dependent on referees who are governed by independent organizations, not the municipalities. Therefore, municipal park and recreation departments and nonprofit sports leagues should not be required to provide oversight of their training and education as HB 5113 mandates.

The Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Association, in conjunction with sports medicine physicians, has developed high quality educational materials for parents and coaches. Furthermore, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) has excellent complementary resources that can easily serve as a resource to educate parents, coaches and referees: (<http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/HeadsUp/youth.html>). CRPA remains unconvinced that it is necessary for the state to expend resources to develop new training.

In summary, CRPA supports the intent of Raised Bill 5113 because we care about the health and wellbeing of the children and families we serve. However, we cannot support the bill as written for the reasons outlined above.



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We believe HB 5113 has serious flaws that would have unintended consequences and actually could limit public access to recreation. CRPA's goal is to ensure that Connecticut's youth have the safest environment in which to participate in youth sports. Their involvement in youth sports is a method to reduce obesity and other health related issues. It connects families and communities, and enhances the quality of life for all; therefore, we stand willing to work with the legislature to draft a workable solution, but cannot support HB 5113 as drafted.

This concludes my testimony. Thank you for your attention.

Wendy Rubin  
Legislative Committee  
Connecticut Recreation & Parks Association