

Testimony for HB 5113 and SB 229

Dear Legislator,

My name is Brent Hawkins and I represent the athletic coaches, parents and athletes in the community of Litchfield, as the Parks and Recreation Director as well as the Head Coach for Boys and Girls Cross Country and Track and Field.

I am writing to express my concern for HB 5113- AN ACT CONCERNING YOUTH ATHLETICS AND CONCUSSIONS. Connecticut already has the most stringent coaching permit and coaching education requirements in the country. We offer the most extensive concussion education course required for coaches in the country. The Connecticut course covers the signs and symptoms of concussions and the chemical occurrence that happens in the brain during the concussed state, it covers other brain injuries such as brain bleeds and skull fractures, scalp and neck injuries. It also trains the coach in an extensive "return to play protocol" which is annually reviewed with all coaches. The current concussion law, the extensive coaching education requirements and the recent actions and mandates put out by the CIAC requiring concussion education for parents & students and limiting contact in football practice far exceeds what is being done in other states and is more than adequately serving and insuring the safety of our student-athletes in the state of Connecticut.

I also have concerns with SB 229- AN ACT CONCERNING SUDDEN CARDIAC ARREST PREVENTION. The current coaching law requires all coaches to maintain current first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). In addition to cardio-pulmonary resuscitation and rescue breathing CPR courses include signs, symptoms and prevention of heart attacks, causes of heart disease, breathing emergencies such as choking and the proper method for obtaining medical treatment for a student in distress. Also, many courses now include training in the use of an AED machine. Additionally, non-teacher coaches by statute must take a 45 clock hour course which includes 15 hours of instruction on the medical aspects of interscholastic coaching. During those 15 hours our course covers sudden cardiac arrest in great detail. Furthermore, this law places the onus for implementation and notification on the coach rather than the school district that has many more resources to deal with these requirements. This will cause coaches to leave the profession where there is already a shortage of qualified individuals. Because state laws already exist that require coaches to have extensive ongoing education and continual first aid & CPR training the portions of this law that place additional requirements on coaches would create an unnecessary burden for coaches thus causing some to leave the profession and deter any newcomers.

Sincerely,

J. Brent Hawkins,
Litchfield Park and Rec, Director
Litchfield High School Cross Country & Track Head Coach