

Testimony for 5113

Dear Legislator,

My name is Barry Chasen, and I represent the athletic coaches, officials, parents and athletes in the community of Simsbury.

I am writing to express my concern with HB 5113- AN ACT CONCERNING YOUTH ATHLETICS AND CONCUSSION

I, Barry Chasen, am a former teacher and coach for 38 years at both New London High School and Windsor High School. I am presently a baseball umpire, entering my 49th year in that avocation. I work college, high school, American Legion, semi-pro and other youth programs, and have worked fifteen amateur world tournaments. I am writing to express my concerns regarding HB 5113 as presently constituted-AN ACT CONCERNING YOUTH ATHLETICS AND CONCUSSIONS.

While all of us in high school and youth athletics is very concerned with the health, safety and overall well-being of the student/athletes, HB 5113 as drafted is not the answer to the concussion issue.

All schools and their athletic personnel are doing everything possible to make athletics as safe as they can. However, mandating additional requirements will have a negative impact, as many present officials will more than likely depart from this avocation and potential new officials will more than likely not want to have to pursue more than is already required of us as officials.

If anything, I would suggest, if it is not presently the situation, that all schools be required to have a trainer on site for their home games, as that is the individual with the most training regarding concussions and other injuries. While none of us wants to see any child suffer a concussion, the game officials are responsible for enough happenings, we have been told what to observe if an athlete suffers an injury, and we are to suggest to the coaches that it may well be best if they remove the player. However, we are not health professionals, and it would be foolish for us to have to remove a player from a contest, if in fact, the individual is deemed able to perform by the experts in the field. Most places take a "save harmless" approach for the game officials, who are responsible for certain safety aspects, like playing conditions prior to and during the game.

The main job of the officials is to see that the playing rules are enforced and to maintain the integrity of the contests. That is all we can hang our hats on, our integrity. If we lose that, we have lost everything, because without honest officials, there is no reason to play the games, which would eliminate these concussion concerns. However, I highly doubt you are looking to eliminate the playing of the games, and honestly, injuries occur no matter how many precautions are taken, how many medical personnel is present, etc. Collisions occur, people fall on hard surfaces in gyms, players get hit

with baseballs and softballs, but in all of these sports, everyone responsible is doing what they are charged with doing at the present time, and officials do not need any added requirements.

Those of us who officiate, do it for the love of the game and to give back to the games we so loved to play ourselves. At the same time, we are in position, as are the coaches to work with young people and help them grow into productive human beings.

While I deeply respect the work put into drafting HB 5113, at this time, this measure should not be passed as constituted. It is not in the best interest of high school or youth sports, and I doubt you would want to negatively impact the opportunities provided by athletic participation, by passing a bill that will more than likely lead to less officials, at a time when we need more to insure the games can be played under proper supervision.

Respectfully submitted,

Barry Chasen
President
Hartford Board of Approved Baseball Umpires

Each year we have to complete in-service training, attend clinics and meetings that address rules and participant safety, and pass a yearly exam, which consists for the most part of 100 questions. To require us to have additional requirements, is asking a bit much.