



The Connecticut Occupational Therapy Association
379 Prospect Street, Wethersfield, CT 06109

Testimony of Sharon McCloskey,
Chair, Government Affairs

Re: Raised Bill No. 5113
AN ACT CONCERNING YOUTH ATHLETES AND
CONCUSSIONS
February 23, 2014

To the Honorable Members of the Committee on Children:

As Board Member and Chair of Government Affairs of the Connecticut Occupational Therapy Association (ConnOTA), I am writing in support of HB 5113. We support the intent behind this legislation to reduce the number of concussions in children and youth as a result of athletic activities. We are in support of strategies that help educate coaches, parents and youths about this issue, and help protect children and teens from concussion and other serious brain injuries.

Occupational therapy practitioners are highly qualified, licensed professionals who work in the school setting, acute care hospitals, acute rehabilitation facilities and medically based outpatient therapy centers to name a few of the settings. Occupational Therapists have expertise in promoting the function and engagement of all children in their everyday learning and routines, to support successful school participation and independence in daily life skills. Occupational therapy addresses the physical, cognitive, psychosocial and sensory components of performance. In schools, occupational therapy practitioners focus on academics, play and

leisure, social participation, and self-care skills (ADLs or Activities of Daily Living), and extra-curricular activities. In the school setting Occupational therapy's expertise includes activity and environmental analysis and modification, with a goal of reducing the barriers to participation. Occupational therapists have both a direct and indirect impact on student's readiness for learning, success in academics and school participation. In the medically based setting Occupational Therapists provide direct intervention to patients after sustaining a concussion / brain injury with a goal to return to the prior level of function.

Concussion is a brain injury, and all concussions are serious. Most concussions occur without loss of consciousness. Concussions can cause a wide range of functional short-term or long-term changes affecting thinking, sensation, language, or emotions; therefore recognition and response is critical to successful child outcomes. Following a concussion a student can present with a number of possible symptoms - increased problems paying attention or concentrating; increased problems remembering or learning new information; longer time needed to complete tasks or assignments; or difficulty organizing tasks. **Symptomatic students may require active supports and accommodations in school, which may be gradually decreased as their functioning improves. Other students may require hospitalization and intensive rehabilitation after the injury.** Occupational therapists are a school and medically based professional who can best support a student's return to school and recovery, in collaboration with the educational and medical team.

I sincerely thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on this important legislation. We support all efforts to prevent brain injury. OT's are instrumental in the care of patients after an injury. With passage of this legislation, the goal is to prevent the need for medically based services after an avoidable injury and keep our students healthy.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon M McCloskey MBA OTR/L