

Testimony for HB 5113

Dear Legislator,

My name is Bob Bernier and represent the athletic coaches parents and athletes in the community of Killingly.

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

My name is Bob Bernier..... I was a former CT DOT PERMIT INSPECTOR/SUPERVISOR. Our paths may have crossed during our lifetimes, especially Tony Gugliermo, Danny Rovero and Don Williams. I especially respect you three as individuals and your continued years of commitment to "simply do the right thing" for the people of Connecticut. For 37 years, I also have been an active member of the largest sports officiating organization in the world, The International Association of Approved Basketball Officials (IAABO). This 16,000 member organization officiates high school basketball games. I am writing to express my serious concerns regarding HB 5113 as drafted – AN ACT CONCERNING YOUTH ATHLETICS AND CONCUSSIONS. I am also a member of the CIAC Girls Basketball Committee and national chairperson of the IAABO Women's Coordinating Committee.

Although everyone connected with high school athletics is genuinely concerned about the health and safety of the participants, HB 5113 as drafted is ill conceived and takes a "One size fits all" approach which is problematic. It will result in numerous unintended consequences that will be detrimental to high school and youth sports.

Since many others will attest to what CIAC, schools, athletic directors, coaches and trainers are doing and will continue to do to make sports safer for the participants, I will focus on the detrimental effect this proposed legislation is certain to have on the 4,000 high school officials and numerous youth officials. Specifically, mandating additional requirements for referees, who are independent contractors, and increasing the liability exposure for these individuals who serve high school and youth sports, will have a major negative impact.

There is a shortage of officials on all levels of amateur sports and HB 5113, as drafted, is certain to be a deterrent to attracting new officials and keeping the ones we have. While several states, including New Jersey, Rhode Island and Massachusetts, have laws that extend immunity to officials against law suits to reduce their liability, this proposed law would increase the exposure for officials in Connecticut, which would be devastating.

It is important for you to understand that the role of the referees is to fairly and impartially enforce the NFHS playing rules while helping to ensure that the games are conducted in a safe environment to minimize risks for the participants. The NFHS 'concussion rule" does not create a duty that officials are expected to perform a medical diagnosis. Referees are simply being asked to use their best judgment in observing and being more cognizant of athletes that may be displaying signs, symptoms and behaviors consistent with concussion, and stop play to provide the opportunity for the athlete to be properly checked by the individuals in charge of their care. To prepare for this role, each year the officials are required to complete in-service training clinics, and an annual examination on the NFHS rules, including an annual review in recognizing the signs and symptoms of concussions in accordance with NFHS rules in all sports. To assist local and state official's boards, the CIAC has provided concussion cards that contain the signs

and symptoms of concussion and other pertinent information and a protocol for officials to follow for all injuries, including concussions.

The officials in our state are dedicated men and women who serve the sport(s) in which they officiate, not for the fee involved, but rather for the love of the game and to help our youth. In short, although this proposed legislation is very well intended, HB 5113 should not be passed as drafted. It is not in the best interest of high school or youth sports. Thank you for the opportunity to express my views.

Please feel free to contact me for additional information or questions. 860-465-7771 or [iaabo8@snet.net](mailto:iaabo8@snet.net)

Respectfully submitted,

Bob Bernier