

Testimony for HB 5113

Good Afternoon Representative Urban, Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Betts and Senator Linares and the distinguished members of the Children's Committee. My name is Brett Aronow. I am both a parent and a member of the Westport Board of Education. As a member of the Board of Education I am very concerned about the safety and well-being of children as well as their ability to achieve their maximum potential in the school setting.

However, I speak to you today about the Concussion legislation at hand solely as a parent who believes it is essential to educate parents regarding concussions, symptoms, recovery and prevention. I am here today on behalf of myself as a parent and coach to testify in support of/on HB 5113, AN ACT CONCERNING YOUTH ATHLETICS AND CONCUSSIONS.

Nearly 3 years ago my daughter a 13 year old playing in a town soccer league was concussed during a game that I was watching. She was hit inadvertently in the face with the ball. She did not stop playing or ask to come out of the game although I thought she was hit quite hard. But I guess she was tough.

As a busy parent of 3 children and co-president of the Westport PTA, her vague symptoms of mainly "I just don't feel well", "I'm tired" went unaddressed. She had also received travel inoculations the following day after school that could have produced side effects of nausea and general malaise as well. Her continued complaints mainly about school hours subsided a bit when she returned home and relaxed. I thought perhaps she was under stress in school and or too busy so encouraged her to slow down, but did not take her to be tested. I had suffered two concussions as a teenager and in both cases my symptoms were more pronounced so I thought I knew about concussions.

After about a week off from soccer she returned to play, however when she tried to practice she didn't feel well. Fortunately, the coach had her sit the next game even when she told him she was okay to play, and luckily we had to miss that weekend's game due to a family trip. It wasn't until 2 full weeks of continued vague complaints now mainly focusing on orchestra and an inexplicable bad grade in math that the nurse recommended that I take her to the pediatrician.

At that point she was diagnosed with a past mild concussion and was still suffering from lingering post-concussive symptoms. My daughter followed the protocol by the pediatrician and still it took several weeks to return to feeling better.

Four months later in her first freshman high school soccer game she was concussed again while playing goalie. Another girl tried to dive over her to avoid, but her feet landed on the back of my daughter's head. Once again she did not remove herself from the game, but the next day she had a headache so we immediately took her out

of school, was diagnosed by a doctor and limited her activity. Because of our previous experience and new knowledge, she recovered more quickly from this event. We strongly encouraged her to stop playing soccer after her 2nd concussion and she obliged.

I am here today to support legislation that would help raise education and awareness of symptoms of concussion for parents in youth sports by making concussion education mandatory and accessible. In addition, I believe that the coaches should not only have mandatory education regarding concussions, but also be required to contact the parents directly if they suspect a potential concussion. In this case, the coach did the right thing by not allowing her to practice and play, but had he advised me of her complaints possibly being consistent with post-concussion symptoms, she may have been treated earlier, and the symptoms may have gone away sooner.

Concussions can occur in a number of sports, girls are particularly vulnerable. Because I was unaware that the symptoms for concussion might be very vague, I didn't take her for treatment in a timely manner. I just want to make sure parents and coaches of children in youth sports and high school sports are educated properly and take all potential injuries seriously.

Respectfully,

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