

Testimony for HB 5113

Dear Legislator,

My name is Julie Harvey, and I am a high school athletics official in the community of Bristol and Northwestern CT. I am writing to express my concern for HB 5113 - AN ACT CONCERNING YOUTH ATHLETICS AND CONCUSSION, specifically Section 5(a)(2) & 5(a)(3) (lines 280 - 295), which mandates concussion training for all youth sports referees.

It appears that the legislature is taking a "shot gun" approach to concussion identification & management in youth athletes, by obligating not only the coaches and athletic trainers, but now bringing referees into the mix. By distributing responsibility across numerous parties, I am afraid the decision process regarding an injured athlete may become much more controversial than it needs to be. What happens when the coach and trainer say the athlete is good to go, but the referee(s) (often taking a conservative approach out of personal liability concerns) disagree? I foresee a rash of suspended competitions and protests arising from involving sports referees in the concussion decision.

As referees, we trust the coaches and trainers to make good decisions regarding the personal health and safety of youth athletes. If you insist on including referees as a second line of defense, please include language stating so, and protect us from yet another layer of liability and controversy. Scholastic sports officials (and many other youth sports officials) are independent contractors, and we already assume personal liability for ensuring the safety of facilities and equipment prior to competition. Increasing our liability by including medical decisions as an added responsibility will place a strain on the already inadequate supply of referees in our state, by forcing out and/or discouraging those who take a conservative approach and do not want yet another area for argument with coaches, parents and fans. The service officials provide in ensuring safe, fair, and legal events is fundamental to athletic competition, and essential to league & CIAC state tournament competition.

I am 100% committed to the safety and health of our youth athletes. However, it must be done in a way that ensures that the competitions may proceed in the manner they were intended. **I respectfully request that the legislature keep primary responsibility for concussion identification and management with the coaches, operators and athletic trainers of youth sports.** Your personal response with your views regarding referee responsibility for concussions management in youth sports is appreciated. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Julie Harvey
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