

Committee on Children
Testimony for Bill No. 5113
An Act Concerning Youth and Concussions

Marie Billye Simmers
Southington, Connecticut
February 27, 2014

Good Day Members of the Committee on Children; my name is Marie Billye Simmers.

I am writing in support of Bill No. 5113: An Act Concerning Youth and Concussions.

I am a member of the Connecticut Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Advisory Board which has been active in our state since 2004 when the Department of Social Services was awarded a Grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to establish a TBI Advisory Board and a Statewide Action Plan to address issues facing persons with brain injury.

The Mission for the CT TBI Advisory Board is: To promote the creation, collaboration and coordination of person-driven, accessible, supports, programs and services for persons with traumatic brain injury, their families and significant others.

I am, also, the Team Leader for the Connecticut Community of Practice for the Prevention of Traumatic Brain Injury. We are focusing on the issues facing children and youth (ages 0-26) with brain injury.

The members of both of these organizations include brain injury survivors, their families, as well as representatives from public and private agencies and advocacy organizations. As you can imagine both organizations are very interested in understanding the incidence and prevalence of brain injury in Connecticut.

A concussion is a traumatic brain injury.

The Connecticut Department of Public Health completed a non-redundant Prevalence Study 1996-2000 identifying 95,000 individuals in Connecticut with a diagnosis of Acquired Brain Injury (ABI), which includes 64,000 individuals with a diagnosis of traumatic brain injury. However when we inquired about the number of children identified with a brain injury we were told by the Connecticut Department of Education and the Bureau of Special Education that there are only 110 school age children with brain injury. We feel this is grossly under reported.

Injury reporting is critical to policy decision making. At this point there are no valid data to help us understand the impact of childhood brain injury but Bill No. 5113 can address this issue through the addition of the language in Section 6 (see below).

Sec. 6. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2014*) (a) For the school year commencing July 1, 2014, the State Board of Education shall require all local and regional school districts to collect and report all occurrences of concussions and other brain injuries to the board not less than twice each school year. Each report shall contain, if known: (1) The nature and extent of the concussion or other brain injury, and (2) the circumstances in which the student sustained the concussion or other brain injury.

(b) For the school year commencing July 1, 2015, and each school year thereafter, the State Board of Education shall send a concussion and other brain injury report to the Department of Public Health containing all of the information received pursuant to subsection (a) of this section.

(c) Not later than October 1, 2015, and annually thereafter, the Commissioner of Public Health shall report, in accordance with section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to children and public health on the findings of the concussion and brain injury report provided to the department pursuant to subsection (b) of this section.

Please support the Bill No. 5113: An Act Concerning Youth and Concussions.

If I can be of further service, please contact me.

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Thank you for your time.