

My name is Michael Cyr, and I am testifying in favor of Raised Bill 5113: An Act Concerning Youth Athletes About Concussions. I apologize for my absence and thank whoever is reading my testimony on my behalf. I am currently a junior at Trinity College in Hartford, and working towards a degree in Neuroscience. Before arriving at Trinity College I had never suffered a concussion despite a childhood packed with constant roughhousing and contact sports like football, lacrosse and wrestling. Being a successful high school athlete who rarely had to miss a single practice I was under the impression that concussions were a concept schemed up by the kids who'd rather make water cooler talk than practice.

I was recruited for football at Trinity College and after a year of sitting on the bench I thought it was finally my time to make an impact as a sophomore. During a preseason scrimmage I took a hit on a play and blacked out for a split second. Shaking off the stars I ignored the subtle symptoms of dizziness and forgetting my locker combination later after practice. Trying to make the roster on a competitive team I kept things to myself. I kept playing for over a month sustaining comparable and more severe hits to the head. Finally, in late October my symptoms caught up with me. I could no longer focus in class and when walking outside the slightest breeze against my forehead would bring on terrible headaches. Unable to function I was forced to tell my trainer and was almost relieved when I was pulled from practice. Not only was I feeling terrible but I was playing terrible as well. My coaches and trainers followed every protocol to keep me safe and healthy but given that I had hidden my symptoms for so long there was not much that could be done. I

missed the rest of what would be an undefeated season for Trinity but my problems continued long after.

I suffered post concussion symptoms that kept me out of classes and landed me in the hospital twice with seizure-like symptoms. Along with some attentional problems and struggling to keep up with my school work I suddenly became an emotional, over-anxious version of myself. I was forgetting sentences mid conversation and getting lost shopping in the supermarket. After a year of healing I started to feel better and the athlete in me took over again. As a junior I joined the wrestling team thinking I would be at a lower risk than playing football. A little over a month into the season I suffered another concussion and just like that, the doctors told me my athletic career was over for good. Luckily, I had been through the ringer and now knew how to take care of myself this time around. This was in December and even though I still deal with headaches and minor memory lapses today, I was able to avoid some of the worst symptoms simply due to the hard earned knowledge I acquired.

I share my story not to scare away athletes and parents but to inform them on how important proper education is. If I can I'd like to prevent my situation from happening to others, especially those younger, more vulnerable and less equipped to cope than me. Sitting in my room trying to ignore the thumping headaches I remember thinking, "how did this happen? And why now? Concussion dialogue didn't exist when I was playing youth football, and I never got one I don't think?" The truth is when a tree falls in the woods and no one is around to hear it, it does make a sound. Concussions exist at all levels and often many go undiagnosed.

Whether or not we choose to address it, kids are suffering minor traumatic brain injuries all the time on the playing field. I played my youth years in the era of the "just getting your bell rung" mentality. Thankfully in my college years when I was injured badly there was a protocol in place on how to deal with me. I can only imagine what would have happened had I been in a similar position when I was 12 and my brain that much more vulnerable.

I am now on the upswing of healing and realize that I learned everything I know about concussions the hard way, through first hand experience. I now know things that could have significantly reduced my recovery time and maybe have kept me on the field today. Nowadays this problem has seen a lot of new light with ex-NFL players coming forward with an array of cognitive problems. Unfortunately in some places the young children in youth leagues aren't afforded the same pool of knowledge, resources and regulations that these professional men are. The more we can arm people with knowledge the safer the participants will be. This begins with informing and training the key players in the system (i.e coaches, managers supervisors) and mandating that they then make that information accessible to parents and participants. It is my feeling that this bill covers the most basic, common sense approach to keeping of your kids safe.

As a 20 year old neuroscience major it was hard for me to make the right decisions regarding my health with concussions. We can't leave young kids out to dry. It is essential that parents, guardians, coaches and and gate keepers of these sports have all of the available facts to best protect the children that rely on them, and that is why I am in full support of this bill. Thank you.

