

February 27, 2014

Committee on Children

Paul Slager, Esq.

**On behalf of the Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut, and
Individually**

My name is Paul Slager of Ridgefield, Connecticut. I am a current Board member and the Immediate Past President of the Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut. I also am an attorney who represents brain injury survivors in litigation. In both of these capacities, I am testifying today in favor of **Raised Bill 5113: *An Act Concerning Youth Athletes And Concussions.***

For more than 30 years, the Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut has worked to increase awareness, research, education and advocacy for people with brain injuries. And, because prevention is the only cure, our organization is dedicated to also reducing the number of brain injuries in Connecticut.

I believe we have an obligation to protect the most vulnerable, and our young children, who are otherwise without a voice, need us to act to protect them. This is why I urge you to support Bill 5113.

In 2010, Connecticut became only the third state in the country to enact concussion legislation. I was President of the Board of Directors of BIAC then, and we were both pleased and proud to work with a coalition of organizations to craft the legislation that became PA 10-62 .

Now, Connecticut's concussion law has fallen far behind other states. Unlike Connecticut's existing law, the laws in 87% of states include the education portions included in this proposed bill and 78% of other states require the

type of informed consent included in the proposed bill. It only stands to reason that educating young athletes, their parents and referees about concussions will result in more effective recognition and diagnosis, as well as much needed early treatment, of head trauma. Connecticut should not be one of the small minority of states that fails to provide its children these protections.

Significantly, the proposed bill would also prevent head trauma in the first place by limiting full contact practice time in football. And the injury reporting aspect of the bill is critical, in that it would provide important methods of evaluating the efficacy of the law and guiding future related policy decisions. This is the way of following whether the law is effectively protecting our children.

Children are among the very most vulnerable to the significant effects of TBI and repetitive head trauma. The current law simply does not meet the current best practices for protecting our children, practices that have been recognized by legislation in other states around the country.

In my capacity as a private attorney who represents brain injury survivors in court, I also wish to dispel any suggestion that this bill will promote or increase litigation against coaches, schools or referees. The contrary is true. One important purpose of this bill is to implement current national best practices here in Connecticut. As the law stands now, a person can fully comply with Connecticut law while still acting well below the safety standards that been established across the country, leaving that person vulnerable to liability claims.

If passed, this bill will not only protect young athletes, but it also will educate schools, coaches and referees on the current best practices and encourage those best practices to be both understood and followed. This will serve two purposes: keeping kids safe and minimizing the liability exposure of those involved in youth sports.

For all these reasons, I urge you to pass ***Bill 5113, An Act Concerning Youth Athletes and Concussions*** as soon as possible.