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Testimony in Support of HB 5113: An Act Concerning Youth Athletics and Concussions

By Senator Toni Boucher

February 27, 2014

Chairman Bartolomeo, Chairman Urban, Ranking Member Linares, Ranking Member Betts, and other distinguished members of the Committee on Children, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of **HB 5113 An Act Concerning Youth Athletics and Concussions**.

This bill proposes a number of requirements that expand on current legislation. The purpose of these requirements is to better educate coaches, parents and athletes on the risks of concussions and other brain injuries, to inform them on how to identify the symptoms of these injuries and to outline the return to play protocol for a student to resume athletic activities.

Under this bill, the State Board of Education would be required to create a concussion education plan, which must be completed by parents and athletes prior to participation in youth sports. Coaches would also be required to take an annual training course for identifying and responding to concussions, and to obtain the informed consent of parents before a student is allowed to play or practice.

This system would ensure that all parties will have access to the same information and will be able to respond quickly and more effectively if an injury occurs. Coaches must immediately remove any athletes exhibiting symptoms of a concussion from competition or practice and notify their parents of any injury within 24 hours. Concussed students will also be barred from further play for 24 hours and must obtain written clearance from a medical professional prior to returning to the athletic activity.

These are prudent measures that we can take to safeguard the wellbeing of our student athletes and to ensure that youth sports remain the fun and healthful activities that they are meant to be. Various concerns have been aired about this bill, including restrictions on full contact practices, and the administrative requirements that the bill places on school districts and other organizations engaged in youth athletics. I hope that the Children's Committee will attempt to address these concerns and work toward a solution that protects the safety of our student athletes and while responding of the organizations that support them. Working out these concerns in the committee process will help the bill to gain unanimous support and assure its passage in the House and Senate.

Thank you for your time and consideration.