

## Testimony for HB 5113

Suzanne Levasseur MS APRN CPNP  
Supervisor of Health Services  
Westport, CT  
203-341-1250 (phone)  
slevasseur@westport.k12.ct.us  
Association of School Nurses of Connecticut

**Greetings** Representative Urban, Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Betts and Senator Linares and the distinguished members of the Children's Committee. For the record, I am Suzanne Levasseur the Health Service Supervisor for the Westport Public School District, a Pediatric Nurse Practitioner, and the President- Elect of the Association of School Nurses of Connecticut (ASNC). I am respectfully submitting written testimony in support of:

### *Raised Bill 5113 AN ACT CONCERNING YOUTH ATHLETICS AND CONCUSSIONS.*

As the knowledge of concussions has increased and our treatment of athletes who have sustained a head injury has changed over the past several years, "minor head injuries" which were frequently called "bell-ringers" are often now being diagnosed as concussions. Many, including the athletes and their parents, still believe that a student has to lose consciousness or be knocked out to suffer a concussion. We have seen first-hand in the educational setting that when a student suffers a concussion and returns to play prior to the resolution of symptoms, those symptoms persist longer, the chance of a second concussion is much more likely, and the overall condition is more severe. This impacts educational, social, and overall functioning of the student. It results in missed school days, in some cases for an extended period of time. While most concussions resolve in a relatively short time, the risk of a second impact prior to complete resolution greatly inhibits the healing process. Changing the culture of "toughing it out" and "taking one for the team" will require sustained and ongoing education. Starting this education and awareness in the youth sports arena will have the desired impact of standardizing this prevention model and will have a positive impact throughout the student's athletic career.

As concussions cannot be seen or even diagnosed by a CT scan or MRI, it becomes imperative that the athlete, with the support of their parents and coaches, understand the importance of accurately and immediately reporting their symptoms so they may be removed from play to assure the best possible outcome. Student-athlete awareness of the recognition of symptoms related to a possible concussion, as well as recognition of the danger of continuing to play is crucial, and can prevent potentially devastating complications. It is also important that the parent, who knows the student-athlete best, be able to recognize sometimes subtle changes in their child.

In the Westport Public School District we began this formal educational process this year. Athletes were educated with their teams and parents were provided with written information, a video link, and informed consent was requested. This collaboration between our athletic department, health services,

and our administrative leadership is the start of a program we hope will continue to evolve and improve to help minimize the incidence and long-term complications of concussions.

The concussion law of 2010 to educate coaches was an excellent step in the right direction, but the effectiveness of that legislation relies on the student athlete themselves accurately and honestly reporting their symptoms. This Bill will bring CT law closer to national best practices. The reporting of suspected concussions to the CT Department of Public Health will help us obtain the data to continue to develop best practices that will reduce the occurrence and morbidity related to concussions in our student athletes.

As the knowledge about concussions and its ramifications continue to evolve so must our actions to protect our children and students. In summary as a member of ConcussionCORPS as a representative of the Association of School Nurses of Connecticut we are in support of Bill No. 5113. "An Act Concerning Youth Athletics and Concussions".