

Subject: HB 5113

March 2, 104

Dear Legislator:

This letter is written by the Eastern Board of Softball Umpires Executive Board. Our members live in over 23 different towns scattered across Eastern Connecticut and collectively have hundreds of years of experience. We are writing to express our concern regarding HB 5113- AN ACT CONCERNING YOUTH ATHLETICS AND CONCUSSION.

As softball umpires, we are genuinely concerned and invested in the safety of all athletes on the playing field. We consistently strive to stay informed, train, review and are tested on all rules and regulations for safe play. This includes but is not limited to concussion guidelines, malicious contact, illegal slides and obstruction. We apply appropriate sanctions and will continue to do so.

The NFHS 2014 Rule book on which we are tested - Rule, Section 3, Article 9 – clearly states “any player who exhibits signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with a concussion (such as loss of consciousness, headache, dizziness, confusion, or balance problems) shall be immediately removed from the game and shall not return to play until cleared by an appropriate **health-care professional.**” Additional information is on Page 89 the NFHS Suggested Guidelines for Management of Concussion. We have also been issued a ‘Concussion Card; that we carry with us and reflects the signs, symptoms of concussions and a protocol to follow in case of. As certified umpires we follow this rule and guidelines each and every time we step on the field. The NFHS ‘concussion rule” does not create a duty that officials are expected to perform a medical diagnosis. We are not health-care professionals, nor do we want to be.

A few years ago a law was passed in the state of Connecticut removing liability for an injured player with a potential concussion from the umpires and placed it in the hands of the coach and health-care professionals – exactly where it should be. Our role as umpires on the field is to impartially administer fair play and competition.

If this law passed as it is now written, the impact will be detrimental to retention of current officials and further recruitment. As independent contractors, these individuals would now be liable to financial loss. Countless hours are spent in rule review, meetings, trainings, and testing – all uncompensated. The fees that these individuals receive for officiating is not why most officiate. Most of these individuals officiate

because they love the sport and enjoy serving and working with young athletes. The burden of additional training and added responsibility will be extremely detrimental..

In conclusion, we the Eastern Board of Softball Umpires emphatically state that HB 5113 should not be passed as drafted. Although the intention to protect young athletes is admirably, as written it may very well unintentionally hurt youth sport.

Respectfully submitted,

Eastern Board of Softball Umpires Executive Board

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