

Hello:

I am writing to support Bill No. 5113, An Act Concerning Youth Athletics and Concussions. As parent, coach and journalist, I am very much aware of the weakness in the existing law in Connecticut regarding concussion safety.

Connecticut's existing concussion law was passed in 2010, and is now one of the most outdated laws in the country. Our law does not contain any provisions for athlete and parent education, which are contained in the vast majority of state laws.

As a parent and coach, I have seen firsthand the need for such legislation. Frequently in youth sports, and the volunteers and parents associated with the team have no idea of proper protocols to follow. This happened with my own daughter several years ago, and I was the team's coach. I did not know how to respond. Fortunately, a nurse saw the injury occur and wisely held my daughter from participation. She went to the hospital and was diagnosed with a concussion. It was scary, traumatic and an eye-opener, because I learned I needed to do more to become more aware in how to treat concussions.

Since then, as a journalist, I have written frequently about the impact of concussions of young athletes. Many of the stories are sad, startling and quite honestly, unnecessary. Some precautions by coaches to remove athletes from games when a young athlete gets a head injury could go a long way toward reducing further complications. Too many times coaches force young athletes to remain in the game and to "shake off" the injury.

A concussion cannot be dismissed so easily. The coaches at the youth level are frequently volunteers who are handling the role of a coach to support their child. That is a noble gesture, and they are doing the best that they can. But they need education on concussion safety. This bill would help provide that, and is an important component to this legislation.

The new legislation would also provide informed consent prior to athlete participation in a sport, limited full contact practice to 90 minutes, and for youth sports organizations to adopt policies similar to high school sports.

The Senior Advisor to the National Football League's Head, Neck and Spine Committee has even endorsed this bill. Dr. Robert Cantu said "This legislation is a dramatic positive step in the right direction and has my enthusiastic support."

Connecticut's law needs to be updated, we are putting children at risk. I urge you to approve this law, and help make the state's playing fields safer for all children.

Sincerely,

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