



Glastonbury High School Athletics
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Trish Witkin, CMAA, Director of Athletics

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My name is Trish Witkin. I am the immediate past president of the Connecticut Association of Athletic Directors and currently serve as the Director of Athletics at Glastonbury High School. I have been involved in athletics as an administrator for more than 15 years and am now experiencing being a parent to three athletes heavily involved in youth sports.

While I am a strong proponent of education particularly where the health, safety and education of our student-athletes is the premise, I submit this testimony in opposition of **HB 5113- An Act Concerning Youth Athletics and Concussions**. I appreciate the efforts of the committee to address the very important topic of concussions and other brain injuries, but I feel this bill does not take into consideration the diversity of our school districts and subsequent athletic programs across the state, the financial toll this will take on school districts trying to meet the unfunded mandates and the impact this will have on youth programs across the state who rely heavily on volunteers to coach their teams and officiate their games.

Here are some specific concerns I have with H.B. 5113:

- Currently, there is curriculum that has been created that addresses the signs and symptoms of concussions as well as the care and prevention of head injuries. We have provided that coursework to more than 13,000 coaches, athletic trainers and athletic directors across the state. This course and the annual refreshers that follow are taught by athletic directors and athletic trainers who are trained in the content. Further, these are the individuals who will work with the coaching staff, athlete and parents to safely return the athlete to play after suffering a head injury. There is no provision made in this bill for those coaches, athletic directors and athletic trainers to be grandfathered in.
- Creating one program to meet the needs of all age groups and programs is concerning to me. While I appreciate the need to educate parents, athletes and coaches at all levels, a course taken by a senior in high school for example, with this particular content, is not age appropriate for a first year player at age seven. Additionally, the method by which a district or town provides education should be left to that district or town. What works in my community might not necessarily work in the next.
- The collection and reporting of data of this magnitude will place a tremendous burden on districts and programs who are already struggling to run their programs with the resources available to them. Additionally, many of these programs are run by volunteers. Another unfunded mandate and I fear we will lose those people we rely on to run these programs.
- Lastly, as a parent of three daughters involved in youth sports, including one who is an umpire in our local little league softball program, I have grave concerns with the added burden this bill would be putting on the youth programs across the state. These programs are run independent of any governing body and the regulation and implementation of this legislation would fall on the many volunteers that keep these programs going. I believe this legislation would deter many from volunteering. I for one would not allow my thirteen year old daughter to continue being a softball umpire should these mandates in place.

In closing, the current legislation provides sound education to the coaches on the high school level. Districts have adopted policies and procedures that incorporate proven return to play policies that addresses the needs of the individual relative to their injury. Measures are in place for each district to extend education to their parents and student-athletes utilizing workshops, forums or seasonal parent meetings. Districts, such as the one I work in, have forged relationships with the youth programs in town and provided this information to their coaches. That can continue without mandate. I feel strongly that the program that is in place is sufficient and will serve the athletes in our state best.

Respectfully submitted,

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