

Madam Chairman, members of the committee, ladies and gentlemen:

My name is William Riccio, Jr., and I serve as the football State Interpreter working as a member of the Connecticut Football Officials Association

I am also a member of the National Federation of State High School Associations Football Rules Committee and a member of the NFHS Football Officials Manual Committee. I come today to discuss Section 5 of the proposed act 5113, the section having to do with officials.

My concern has to do with those sections that would require additional training of officials in recognition of concussion and head trauma. That concern is such that I believe if enacted, officials will be given a liability that the NFHS Rules Committee, its Sports Medicine Advisory Committee and the legal experts at NFHS have worked to limit.

Let me assure the committee officials have for the last several years reviewed those signs and symptoms of concussion with all of our members at the mandatory interpretation meeting and is also reviewed at other meetings during the year. It is part of the discussion each year at the annual CFOA state clinic, and at the various local chapter clinics prior to the season.

Five years ago, under the direction and advice of the Sports Medicine Advisory Committee and the legal team at NFHS, rules and protocols were changed regarding what officials should and should not do in the case of injuries. We are to defer any decisions regarding head injury – or any other injury – to medical professionals. Our job is to get a player “evaluated” – the term we teach our officials to use – by the medical team.

Since the rules and protocols were changed, the responsibilities for evaluating the players are where they should be: with the medical staff, coaches and athletic professionals who see these players each and every day. Officials are there only for scrimmages and games and are not privy to the individual players’ histories – nor should we be.

The proposal, I believe, will increase our liability – putting us in the position of diagnosticians

Officials have a responsibility to be cognizant of players showing signs or symptoms of concussion: a responsibility medical and legal experts have determined as sufficient. In passing section 5 of this act, we are not advancing the cause, only the liability. I ask that officials be stricken from the act should it go onto further consideration.

Thank-you for allowing me to speak before you today.