

Testimony before Children's Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly

Regarding Raised Bill No. 229

Thursday, February 27, 2014

Good afternoon Committee Chairs and Members, thank you for your time. My name is Vicki O'Rourke. I am a resident of Darien, Connecticut. I have worked with the Peñas and Senators Leone and Duff on Bill No. 229. Let me give you some brief background. A similar law, known as the Sudden Cardiac Arrest Prevention Act, has been enacted in Pennsylvania and New Jersey and is currently pending in 7 other states.

I support Bill No. 229 although I believe this is a situation where less is actually more. I recommend that the bill be simplified to include three primary components.

First, I support the requirement that a parent and student athlete must sign an informed consent before participation in any school athletic activity. I recommend that the Board of Education adopt the consent form used in Pennsylvania. I do not support any further parent or student education regarding sudden cardiac arrest or SCA.

Second, I support the requirement that all coaches of school athletic activities receive annual training on SCA. Again, I suggest that the Board of Education adopt the training that is currently used in Pennsylvania, which is a 9 minute online video that coaches can watch on their laptop or iPad from home. We have already received permission from Simon's Fund, the creator of that video, to use it in Connecticut. In addition, Simon's Fund has agreed, at its own expense, to modify the video if necessary to make it apply to Connecticut. To be clear, I do not support lengthy initial training or refresher courses every five years for coaches.

Lastly, I support the removal from play requirement for players exhibiting symptoms of SCA until they are cleared by a licensed medical professional.

Bill No. 229, as proposed, is budget neutral to the State. We are asking for a consent form, 9 minutes of coaches' time annually, and removal from play requirements. Our main goal is to save the lives of student athletes in Connecticut. It is estimated that over 2000 student athletes die annually from SCA. We need to make sudden cardiac arrest a household name so that people no longer assume it is only an adult problem. Bill No. 229, as proposed, will do this. Once Bill No. 229 is passed, we, as a state and as a community of coaches, educators and parents, will be saving our children's lives. Thank you.