



PINK CONCUSSIONS

Feb. 17, 2015

Dear Representative Urban, Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Betts, Senator Linares and the distinguished members of the Children's Committee,

I am here to testify in support of HB #6722 with some modifications.

For the record, my name is Katherine Price Snedaker. I have a Masters Degree in Social Work and live in Norwalk, CT. I am speaking today as a parent and the Executive Director of the non-profit PinkConcussions.com – an organization that focuses on female concussions – and SportsCAPP.com – a youth sport concussion educational organization. I serve as Associate Member On the [National Sports Concussion Coalition](#) and Chair of Technology Work Group and Member of the Advisory Council of the [National Council on Youth Sports Safety, Inc.](#)

As the parent of a senior in high school who has permanent cognitive challenges as a result of a concussion that was not managed well, back in 2006, I have devoted the last six years to prevent this from happening to other children. As a mother, I watched as two of sons' lives were affected and altered by concussions.

Despite having three sons for years in youth sports and being a volunteer coach for six of those years, the only concussion education I ever had was from an article in US Lacrosse magazine, yet that one article motivated me to take the correct steps to have my son checked by a doctor when he was concussed at school recess. As youth sports coach, I just didn't see head injuries on the field. After concussion education and with the free PAR CRR app designed by Dr. Gerry Gioia on my iPhone, in one year alone, I pulled out five youth players from games as a parent and as a coach, and assessed they needed to "sit it out and see a doctor." All five players I pulled were later diagnosed by their MDs with concussions, and that is how I was convinced that sideline concussion education really works.

Why are our most vulnerable children by being coached by adults with the least knowledge of concussion?

Based on medical science and recovery rates for young children, concussion-aware coaches are needed to coach elementary and middle school aged athletes. From my experience, many kids have their first concussion while they are middle school age playing youth sports, not in high school sports. My sons suffered their first concussions on school grounds in 6th and 7th grade. These early-mismanaged concussions set a poor framework for further concussions in high school.

But there is solution available now that will turn this tide... **Concussion education for everyone involved in Youth Sports and this education is simple, effective and free.**

Here are examples of successful implementation of such concussion policy:

The BokSmart Program

- All Youth Rugby Coaches in South Africa
- 78,000 coaches trained in concussion education plus other first aid skills
- 8 hour course - must be taken to coach a game
- All youth rugby players in the country now have trained coaches

The Chicagoland Youth Football League

- 42 Communities in the Chicago Metro area
- 1857 coaches trained in concussion management using
- 90 minute video
- 360 teams all have at least 5 trained coaches
- 8615 youth football players now have trained coaches
- 180 games each weekend all covered by certified athlete trainers
- 360 team's practices are covered by safety player coaches
- 0 the number of coaches who left due to the additional burden of concussion training
- 2 parents complained the first year and none the second

The City of Norwalk Recreation & Parks

- 6,000 youth players
- 700 coaches
- 30 minute CDC Coach Training
- 11 Leagues: At least five baseball leagues, two soccer leagues, Norwalk Junior Lacrosse plus the town basketball, field hockey and football leagues

With my petition and efforts, the Norwalk Guidelines have just been approved last week and apply to all City of Norwalk sponsored **Athletic Activities and Programs** and to those Athletic Activities and Programs operated or conducted by any **User Group or Organization** on or in facilities belonging to the City of Norwalk.

Athletic Activities and/or Athletic Programs = all activities including practices, training, performances, scrimmage, games and other organized competitions involving athletic activities such as sports and dance.

User Group or Organization = mean any group or organization that has been granted permission to use any City of Norwalk recreation facility.

If any sports team wants to use city fields, gym or courts, must...

- **Educate Coaches, Parents, and Athletes:**
 - Inform and educate coaches, through FREE CDC ONLINE training
 - Educate athletes and parents and guardians about concussion via CDC concussion information sheet
- **Remove From Play any Athlete** who is showing signs, symptoms, behaviors of concussion
- **Obtain Permission to Return to Play:** An athlete can only return to play or practice after at least 24 hours and with permission from a health care professional
- **Record** and submit to Parks & Rec any concussions over the season

I believe Data must be collected at local, regional, state levels on all student-athlete injuries to evaluate the effects of the current law, any changes to the law, and for research to direct future policy. Our current data is weak on all aspects of concussions. I believe the key to collecting data is streamlined, app-based, paper-free,

smart-phone apps.

And finally I want to conclude with some quotes from Motions to Dismiss papers from the current youth soccer lawsuit filed by FIFA, US Soccer, Defendant National Association of Competitive Soccer Clubs, Inc., d/b/a US Club Soccer ("USCS"), American Youth Soccer Organization ("AYSO"), California Youth Soccer Association, Inc. These quotes make it very clear who the national soccer organizations believe should will be held liable in future concussion lawsuits. I had hoped this soccer lawsuit would force the hands of these international and national leaders in soccer to produce a unified concussion plan for youth players. Instead I am saddened to read the responsibility being pushed down squarely upon the shoulders of the volunteer coach - the one with "direct contact" with the children.

The Motions to Dismiss below in nutshell state that none of the international or national soccer organizations are responsible to change any rules around concussion issues because:

1. They "lack direct contact with the players." SHIFTING BLAME TO THE VOLUNTEER COACHES
2. They "have no duty to make the game safer or to ameliorate risks inherent in the sport; their only duty is to not increase such risks. " STATUS QUO IS LEGAL
3. FIFA clearly states it "has no legal duty to Plaintiffs to prevent risks that are inherent in the sport, like those from heading a soccer ball." YOU KNEW THE RISKS FOR YOUR CHILD.
4. US Soccer states, "Legislature in each of those states has specifically addressed the issue of concussion management for youth sports, and none has imposed such obligations on an organization like US Soccer. Rather, like the Consensus Statement, the focus of the various state concussion laws is on educating and assigning responsibility to **those individuals who have direct contact with the players** to prevent a child suspected of having suffered a concussion from returning to play without first obtaining clearance from the child's medical provider."

These papers a chilling read for I think this "not our responsibility" approach will do more to scare the volunteer coach away from working with kids than asking them to do 20 min online CDC training course.

Please join the other states leading the way for children's safety and enact youth sport concussion training for coaches. Just a few minutes of concussion education, an article, a flyer and iPhone app can make the difference in how a parent responds to their child's possible head injury. Connecticut protects its youngest and most vulnerable athletes. **The CDC coach's training only takes 20 minutes. A brain injury can last a lifetime.**

Thank you,

Katherine

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[Pink Concussions](#) female concussion
[The Concussion Conference](#) professional concussion trainings for school nurses & school staff
[Sports CAPP](#) youth sport concussion