

February 17, 2015

Committee on Children Public Hearing Testimony

**Deb Shulansky, JD, CBIS, Director of Community Outreach and Support
Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut (BIAC)**

Good Afternoon Representative Urban, Senator Bartolomeo and the distinguished members of the Children's Committee. My name is Deb Shulansky and I am the Director of Community Outreach and Support at the Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut (BIAC), a member of the State of CT TBI Advisory Board, the Connecticut Concussion Task Force, and the CT State Team for Community of Practice for Prevention of TBI. Additionally, I am the mother of three athletes, two have a history of sustained concussions and one had post-concussion syndrome and was on medical leave for 3 months during her sophomore year of high school.

I am testifying today in favor of Raised Bill 6722: *AN ACT CONCERNING CONCUSSIONS IN YOUTH ATHLETICS*, which extends existing legislation on concussion education and management to Youth Athletics programs through-out our state.

Concussion education must be mandatory for all youth athletes, their parents and coaches, regardless of whether the athletic endeavor is part of a school sports program or through a town or club league. Accurate information about the signs and symptoms of concussion help facilitate recognition, proper diagnosis and needed treatment of concussion. Recognizing a possible concussive impact and properly responding by removing an athlete from the activity when it first occurs is essential.

Additionally, it is critical that this education mandate begin with our youngest youth athletes (age 3) so that the culture of reporting and treating concussions can begin to change with the youngest athletes involved in organized youth athletic programs.

One concern that has been raised is that volunteers may not come forward to coach youth athletics if this raised bill becomes law. It is important to note that this legislation does *not* task a volunteer youth athletics coach to diagnose an athlete's concussion, rather the coach, having completed a concussion recognition education course, would remove an athlete who may have been

concussed during practice or play. At that point the athlete would be fully assessed for concussion by a licensed health care provider who is knowledgeable about concussion.

In my role at BIAC, I work to increase awareness and understanding of concussion and other brain injuries. While concussion awareness is increasing, there remains a lack of public understanding of brain injury and its consequences. Young, developing brains are more sensitive to trauma, and children have weaker necks than adults, making brain trauma more damaging. As a result, we have a responsibility to protect all of our youth athletes, not just those within the school system, from returning to play too soon after possibly sustaining a concussion.

Accordingly, I urge you to pass Raised House Bill 6722 to reduce the number of concussions in children in our state.

Thank you.

Debra J. Shulansky, *JD, CBIS*
107 Meadow Lane
West Hartford, CT 06107
860-561-2511