



ParentsConcussionCoalition

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Good morning Representative Urban, Senator Bartolomeo and members of the Children's Committee. My name is Diana Coyne, and I am a member of the Parents Concussion Coalition. Our group has spent the past 3 years working to implement basic concussion safety measures for children in CT. I am personally driven to do this because my son sustained multiple concussions as a high school football player and I know all too well the significant health problems that these concussions can cause.

First, I wanted to sincerely thank the Children's Committee for your leadership and support, which resulted in the unanimous passage of the concussion legislation last year. With Public Act 14-66, high school athletes will now have basic concussion safety measures. We are looking to you once again, because we have an obligation to provide similar protection for our youngest and most vulnerable athletes.

I have heard experts in concussion law talk about why legislators in all 50 states have supported concussion safety provisions for our youth. They describe a "Wild West" climate in youth sports where purpose, rules, accessibility and safety are being driven by private organizations. But these organizations, all too often, aren't prioritizing the safety of our youth.

Concussions not only top the news headlines these days, they top the list of fears among parents as well. In a large poll conducted by ESPN last fall, more than 87% of parents worry about the risk of injury in youth sports, with concussion cited as the injury of most concern. Additionally, more than 80% of parents have concerns about the quality of youth coaches.



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Most parents classified these two issues as a “big concern.” These sentiments by parents are a loud call to action for all stakeholders to engage fully in these issues. The proposed legislation will go far in addressing the two biggest concerns parents have about youth sports.

I was a member of the Legislative Youth Concussion Task Force, and the Task Force recommendations include more provisions than what is in House Bill 6722. The Task Force is asking for the 3 core principles of concussion safety or what is called the “Lystedt law”: 1) Awareness—educating parents, athletes and coaches; 2) Removal from Play if a sign or symptom is observed; and 3) Return to Play policies.

I am thrilled that CT is making progress, but we have much catch up to do. We became the 48<sup>th</sup> state to enact mandatory education for high school athletes with the legislation last year. Already 20 states have provisions for youth sports—which is the legislation in front of you today. But several other states have enacted “progressive” legislation. This would include provisions that require a health care professional on the sideline for all contact sport competitions, minimum 1 week removal from play if there is a concussion diagnosis, return to learn provisions and concussion management teams in the school, and limits on contact practices for middle school and high school football players.

What the task force is recommending is considered the minimum standard of care. I believe that we have an obligation to protect our most vulnerable. Our young children, who don’t have a voice, need us to act to protect them. That is why I urge you to support the task force recommendations