

## **SB 1038 – Testimony**

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Connecticut Section 31-23 is currently silent regarding the age of youth officials, hence, the Federal Child labor laws come into play. USA Hockey applauds the fact that the Connecticut Labor board is proposing to remove any ambiguity, however, the bill as it is written today, will significantly impact the ability for all sports to provide appropriate officials coverage for many youth sports programs.

Specifically, USA Hockey, similar to many sports, is already faced with a declining official base year over year. The number of registered USA Hockey officials decreased 12% from 2014 to 2015. This marks the 3<sup>rd</sup> consecutive year of declining official base.

Currently 15% of USA Hockey registered officials in Connecticut are under 14 years of age. Today, these officials work mainly recreational house games (versus competitive travel teams) as well as under age 10 and under age 8 games. By allowing minors under age 14 to work these types of games, they begin to develop the skill sets in order to work higher level games in the future, including High school games. It also promotes teamwork, accountability and responsibility. Some of these officials do not play hockey and have a career goal of becoming an ice hockey official. In the last 3 years alone, Connecticut has graduated 4 officials who are currently working Junior Hockey Programs throughout the United States, all have a goal of working in NHL and most started officiating when they were under 14. In addition, allowing minors to officiate allows them to have the ability to make a little extra money in doing something that they truly want to do, whether it be hockey, soccer, little league, or any sport.

USA Hockey has a strong mentor program in Connecticut. The program consists of pairing up a new official with a seasoned official. The new officials are evaluated until the official is ready to move on to their own assignment.

USA Hockey requires all refs to be recertified every year – including a live seminar, open book test and for other than level 1 a closed book test as well

This season we covered more than 9000 youth hockey games.

Concerns about the pending legislation:

1. Minimum age of 14
  - a. Restricting the age to officiate may result in games not being properly officiated by a certified referee. This season alone, USA Hockey covered more than 9000 youth hockey

games. NY has pending legislation revising the age to a minimum of 12 years of age with an additional restriction of a similar certification requirement , as well as parental consent (information on NY Bill provided below).

2. Minor must work with a partner 18 years or older

Via our mentor program, the senior official is always over 18, however, once they have passed their evaluation and graduated, we allow 14 year old refs to work younger aged games. Senior officials request to work the older games , which often pay the referee a higher game fee. If it is mandated that someone over 18 must work, USA Hockey would need to increase the associated game fee for the adult referee.

Positive:

1. Can only work youth groups aged younger than the referee
2. Must be certified from a national organization
3. Limited hours per week and off school time

BILL NUMBER: S3519

STATE OF NEW YORK

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3519

2015-2016 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

February 11, 2015

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AN ACT to amend the labor law, in relation to permitting a minor over twelve years of age to work as a referee for athletic games or competitions under certain circumstances

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK, REPRESENTED IN SENATE AND ASSEMBLY, DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. Subdivision 2 of section 130 of the labor law is amended by adding a new paragraph i to read as follows:

I. A MINOR OVER TWELVE YEARS OF AGE AS A REFEREE AT AN ATHLETIC GAME, COMPETITION OR TOURNAMENT, INVOLVING COMPETITORS WHO ARE TWELVE YEARS OF AGE OR YOUNGER, HOSTED BY AN ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION OR ORGANIZATION THAT HAS TRAINED AND TESTED SUCH MINOR IN ACCORDANCE WITH ESTABLISHED SAFETY STANDARDS, FOR A DURATION OF TWENTY HOURS OR LESS PER WEEK AND DURING TIMES WHEN SCHOOL IS NOT IN SESSION AND THE MINOR IS ACCOMPANIED BY THE PARENT OR GUARDIAN OR HAS PRESENTED THE WRITTEN CONSENT OF THE PARENT OR

GUARDIAN.

PURPOSE:

An act to amend Subdivision 2 of § 130 of the labor law to allow a minor over twelve years of age, after completing proper training, to act as a referee at athletic games, competitions and tournaments involving competitors who are eleven years of age or younger.

SUMMARY OF PROVISIONS:

This bill would amend § 130 the Labor Law, which prohibits employment of minors under the age of fourteen years, to include an additional exception. Currently, there are exceptions for minors under the age of fourteen that permit them to be employed under certain circumstances. This bill would add the following exception: A minor over twelve years of age who acts as a referee at an athletic game, competition or tournament, involving competitors who are twelve years of age or younger, hosted by an athletic association or organization that has trained and tested such minor in accordance with established safety standards, for a duration of twenty hours or less per week and during times when school is not in session with the written consent of a parent or guardian.

JUSTIFICATION:

It is currently common practice for children aged twelve and over to serve as a referee for younger children's sporting events. This provides the host organization with an official for their games at less than half the cost of hiring an adult referee, and provides the child referee with a safe and enjoyable way to make money. Recently, concerns have arisen that this common practice is in conflict with current labor law. This legislation will add referee to the list of exceptions to Labor Law § 130, allowing children aged twelve and over to officiate games for children aged eleven and under for no more than twenty hours per week and only when school is not in session with the written consent of a parent or guardian.