

February 16, 2016

## **Committee on Children Public Hearing Testimony**

**Julie Peters, CBIS, Executive Director**

### **Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut (BIAC)**

Good afternoon Representative Urban, Senator Bartolomeo and the distinguished members of the Children's Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify at this important hearing regarding the safety of our youth. My name is Julie Peters and I am the Executive Director of the Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut (BIAC). For over 30 years, BIAC has served individuals with brain injuries, their families and caregivers, educating the public about prevention, which remains the only cure for a brain injury, and working to assure that services are available to those who sustain a brain injury.

I am testifying today regarding Raised Bill 5141: *AN ACT CONCERNING CONCUSSIONS AND YOUTH ATHLETIC ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED ON PUBLIC FIELDS*.

In 2010, Connecticut became only the third state in the country to enact concussion legislation. I was both pleased and proud to work with a coalition of organizations to craft the legislation that became PA 10-62.

However even with amendments in 2014 and 2015, Connecticut's concussion law has now fallen far behind most other states.

While this bill contains important provisions which would improve the safety of youth sports, the inclusion of an immunity clause removes a critical incentive to follow the law. The intent of this bill is to improve the understanding of concussions for athletes and parents by providing them with concussion information. Under the bill, athletic operators are required to act reasonably to create a safer playing environment for athletes: there is no requirement for concussion diagnosis, rather the bill affords for an increase in concussion knowledge with an expectation that an increase in the likelihood of reasonable conduct will follow and result in fewer injuries. As athletic operators are not being asked to diagnose a concussion, an amendment providing immunity not only is unnecessary, it would be harmful by negating the necessity for reasonable conduct. We cannot support a bill which includes an immunity clause because of the dangerous precedent it will set.

To strengthen this important bill, I urge the committee to amend the bill to:

- There is no need to develop or approve new training courses. The CDC training course is considered the “gold standard” and should be used exclusively, not the outdated training provided by the Connecticut Concussion Task Force for both the initial concussion education and for the annual review
- Replace the currently approved Informed Consent Form with the CDC Parent and Athlete Concussion Information Sheet. The current form is inaccurate and does not comply with the law.
- Language must be added to require that the athletic operator immediately remove from play any athlete who is observed to exhibit signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with a concussion following an observed or suspected blow to the head or body, and that the athlete should not be allowed to return to activity on that day.

It is time to broaden the concussion education and protocol mandate to protect all of our youth athletes. Accordingly, I urge you to amend Raised House Bill 5141, as indicated, including removing the immunity clause to allow ALL of our kids the full enjoyment of sports in a safe and informed manner.

Thank you.

Julie Peters, CBIS  
Executive Director  
Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut