

TESTIMONY FOR THE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN

Submitted by: Michelle (Shelli) Dyer
Public Hearing Date: February 16, 2016

Testimony regarding *AN ACT CONCERNING CONCUSSIONS AND YOUTH ATHLETIC ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED ON PUBLIC FIELDS*

Dear Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban, and esteemed members of the Committee on Children:

My name is Michelle Dyer, and I am a neuroscience major at Trinity College as well as a concussion survivor. I am writing to testify on **Raised Bill No. 5141**, which aims to increase concussion education and improve the safety of youth athletes by requiring athletic operators to follow concussion protocol. As drafted, however, this bill contains an immunity clause that will remove the incentive for some operators to comply with provisions of this law. Therefore, I cannot support this bill.

While this bill contains important provisions to raise concussion awareness and knowledge, it does not ensure that the best practices for concussion safety will be met. The adherence of proper concussion protocol for youth athletes is necessary regardless of the operator or the location of the athletic activity. Concussion education must be mandatory for *all* youth athletic operators.

In addition, this bill seeks to require athletic operators to act reasonably to create a safer playing environment for athletes, but it does not require a concussion to be diagnosed. While operators are not being asked to diagnose a concussion, an amendment providing immunity is unnecessary and potentially harmful to young sportspersons by eliminating the requirement to follow reasonable conduct.

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

1. Require the use of the CDC training course which is considered the “gold standard.” It should be used exclusively – not the outdated training provided by the Connecticut Concussion Task Force – for both the initial concussion education and for the annual review. There is no need to develop or approve new training courses.
2. 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.
3. Add language to require athletic operators to immediately remove an athlete from play who is exhibiting signs, symptoms, or behaviors that are consistent with a concussion following an observed or suspected blow to the head or body. Additionally, the athlete should not be allowed to return to activity on that day.

In addition, athletic operators must be required to:

1. Have a refresher course every two years to ensure current information regarding recognition of the signs and symptoms of concussion and best practices relating to proper recognition, management, and treatment of concussions.
2. Recognize a possible concussive impact and properly respond when a potential concussion occurs.
3. Follow the education mandate beginning with athletes as young as age five (5), so that the culture of reporting and treating concussions can begin to change.

In closing, I urge the committee to remove the immunity clause from Raised Bill No. 5141. If this bill is passed as drafted, it could be another year or more until these athletes are safeguarded from improper adherence to concussion protocol. We have a responsibility to protect all youth athletes, regardless of the operator or location of the sports activity.

Sincerely,

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