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Testimony of
Christopher DiPasquale, PhD, PT

In Support of
HB 5130 An Act Concerning Clearance of Student Athletes with Concussions for Participation in Team
Activities

Before the Public Health Committee
February 16, 2016

Chairperson Gerrantana, Chairperson Ritter, Vice Chairperson Crisco, Vice Chairperson Riley and members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Chris DiPasquale and I am a resident of Hebron Connecticut and a physical therapist practicing at offices in Colchester and Hebron Connecticut and teach part-time in the physical therapy program at UCONN.

I am testifying in support of HB 5130.

Returning athletes to participation following concussion is within the scope of practice of physical therapists. All physical therapists receive extensive education and training in the evaluation and treatment of neurological conditions and in practice manage issues far more complex than those dealt with in return to participation concussion protocols. Physical therapists in Connecticut and around the country are currently returning injured athletes to participation following standard concussion protocols. In Connecticut I have provided sole sideline medical coverage including return to play decisions in environments ranging from division one college to public high and middle school and youth sports teams. In my office practice I commonly find myself as the sole healthcare professional providing evaluation of concussion and progressive return to activity treatment. In other words it is longstanding common practice in Connecticut for physical therapists to provide this type of care.

In 2015 statutes in 23 states allowed physical therapists to return primary and secondary school athletes to participation. Physical therapists were named as qualified providers in 2015 proposed federal concussion legislation (S. 436 – Senator Menendez / H.R. 4829 – Representatives Pascrell and Capps) and in 2 prior years were also named in similar federal legislation. The proposed federal legislation entices state adoption of the federal concussion legislation by coupling continued federal funding. Also on the federal level physical therapists are members of the CDC taskforce developing pediatric concussion guidelines that started in 2012 and also via the American Physical Therapy Association participation at the 2014 White House Concussion Summit.

Current Connecticut statutes do not limit a physical therapist from clearing a primary or secondary school athlete to participate. The statutes only prohibit the holder of a public school coaching permit from accepting clearance to participate of a concussed athlete by a physical therapist. In contrast coaches routinely accept our clearance to participate for other injuries. This places an unnecessary burden on public school coaches as well as limiting public school athlete's treatment choice and potentially increases healthcare costs by requiring an additional medical appointment.

As awareness of concussion injury and treatment increases and as legislation expands mandates for care this is an opportunity to correct a flaw in Connecticut concussion legislation and provide our residents with added access to appropriate care.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any question or if you would like additional or more specific information.

Cc: Representatives Linda Orange and Gayle Mulligan