

Testimony and Concern for: H.B. No. 7235 (Raised) Education. AN ACT CONCERNING MINOR REVISIONS AND ADDITIONS TO THE EDUCATION STATUTES' Section 16

My name is Trish Witkin and I submit this testimony today to share my opposition to Raised House Bill 7253, specifically Section 16. Having served as an athletic administrator for the last nineteen (19) years in three school districts in Connecticut, I can say with confidence and conviction that governance of high school interscholastic athletics should remain solely in the hands of the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Association (CIAC).

Over the course of my tenure as an athletic administrator, I have seen first hand the great care and attention the CIAC puts into the programs they administer, rules they enforce and oversight they provide athletic administrators and principals who provide education based programs to the **125,000** high school aged athletes across our state. The programs and initiatives they provide are based soundly on the ideals and core values every education based athletic program is founded on. They take great care in administering rules and expectations that are consistent with national trends and best practices. Appropriate personnel and experts are consulted before new initiatives are implemented, such as the Medical Society when concussion and sudden cardiac arrest education was explored and implemented. The CIAC staff works closely with principals and athletic administrators across the state, representing all schools regardless of their demographics or socio-economic standing. Principals and Athletic Administrators, myself included, make up the roster on all CIAC committees, with representation spanning schools of all sizes and demographics. They provide the needed framework by which all programs operate, ensuring a level playing field and appropriate guidance for our programs.

Over the last five years, I have had the privilege of serving on a national board of directors. This opportunity exposed me to the challenges my colleagues face across the country and I can say confidently that what we have established here in Connecticut, with the CIAC governing high school athletics, is second to none. And while I can appreciate that some people may take exception to a rule or set of rules because of how they are impacted personally, the CIAC strives to govern in the best interest of our most important stakeholders, our student-athletes, and in my professional opinion, they do so successfully.

I implore you to evaluate this particular section of the bill very carefully and understand that the motive behind it might be to satisfy the needs of a few, to the detriment of many. Rules and regulations are needed in interscholastic sports. We cannot take control and oversight away from a proven organization, dedicated to fair and equitable opportunities for all, and give it to another department already stretched with their current responsibilities, and one not equipped to serve the needs of our student-athletes across the state.