



**Testimony of the Commissions on Women, Children & Seniors and Equity and Opportunity
Submitted to the Committee on Children February 7, 2019**

**RE H.B 7001; H.B 7002; H.B 7003; H.B 7004; H.B 7005; H.B 7006; H.B 7007 Acts
Related to Child Well-being and Safety**

Senator Daugherty, Representative Linehan, Ranking and other distinguished members of the Committee on Children; my name is Steven Hernández, Executive Director of the Commissions on Women, Children & Seniors and Equity & Opportunity (CWCS/CEO). Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

**Raised H.B. 7001, An Act Concerning The Notification Of Certain Employers Of The
Placement Of An Employee On The Child Abuse And Neglect Registry**

According to Section 17a-101k-1 of the Connecticut General Statutes, certain criteria must be met before an individual is added to the central registry. Specifically, that the commissioner or commissioner's designee has determined that abuse or neglect has occurred and the individual responsible poses a risk to the health, safety or well-being of children.

Due to the fact that individuals placed on the registry have been found to have put a child's health, safety or well-being at risk, the Commission fully supports HB 7001 which requires that the commissioner of children and families make a reasonable effort to notify the individual's employer of their placement on the registry, if the individual is employed in a capacity that requires them to have direct contact with children. Although an employer may conduct an initial inquiry of an individual's name on the registry prior to hire, subsequent periodic checks are not often done.

This bill brings the statute into alignment with existing requirements for individuals in regular contact with children through their employment. This bill would allow employers to join with us in providing an additional layer of protection for the children of Connecticut.

**Regarding H.B 7002, An Act Concerning The Inclusion Of Camera, Computer And
Cellular Mobile Telephone Repair Personnel As Mandated Reporters.**

CWCS/CEO supports HB 7002 and its purpose: to include camera, computer and cellular mobile telephone repair personnel as mandated reporters of child abuse and neglect.

This bill adds camera, computer and cellular mobile telephone repair personnel to the long list of professionals enumerated in law (Section 17a-101 of the General Statutes) who

might in the course of their work have reason to learn of, and therefore are mandated to report, suspected abuse and neglect of a child.

CWCS/CEO supports initiatives that protect children in our state from continued harm. While there is a reasonable expectation of privacy in these devices, it is far outweighed by the state's strong public interest in protecting children whose health and welfare may be adversely affected through injury and neglect. It is this concern for the health and welfare of children which has extended our mandated reporter coverage to other professions, i.e., physicians, surgeons, interns, nurses, dentists and dental hygienists, social workers, coaches, members of the clergy, and mental health professionals.

Currently, film processors are mandated reporters in Alaska, California, Colorado, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Louisiana, Maine, Missouri, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and West Virginia. While computer technicians are required to report in Alaska, California, Illinois, Missouri, Oklahoma, and South Carolina.

Regarding H.B. 7003, An Act Concerning A Moratorium On The Use Of Recycled Tire Rubber At Municipal And Public School Playground

This Act addresses rising public concern about the safety of recycled tire used as infill on playgrounds. Research studies globally have provided evidence of toxic chemicals in recycled tires. In Connecticut, a study led by Yale Professor Gaboury Benoit detected 96 chemicals in samples of tire rubber. Of the 96 chemicals, almost half underwent incomplete toxicity assessments. Of these, 20% are considered probable carcinogens and 40% are known irritants for the lungs, skin, or eyes.

Studies like these led to the development of the Federal Action Plan on Recycled Tire Crumb Used on Synthetic Turf Playing Fields and Playground. This action plan aims to characterize these chemicals and their potential environmental and human health impacts. With so much still unknown about the makeup of these recycled materials, CWCS/CEO supports efforts for a moratorium until the findings from the Federal Action Plan are released. It is best to err on the side of caution in order to ensure the safety of our children now and in the future.

Regarding H.B 7004, An Act Concerning Concussion Education For Coaches Of Youth Athletic Activities

HB 7004 which would require coaches of youth athletic activities to take an online concussion course. The Commission supports any efforts which ensure the safety of children during athletic activities and recognizes Connecticut's progress and commitment to keep children protected beyond school athletics.

A concussion is a traumatic brain injury, which can harm the brain and stunt young developing minds. Athletes who have had a concussion during any point in their lives have a greater likelihood of being exposed to another. Recurrent, unrecognized, and untreated

concussions can be dangerous for children, and in some cases could cause long-term health problems including altering behavior, feelings, and a child's ability to learn. Excessive brain swelling or permanent damage can even be fatal. That is why it is imperative that coaches, parents, and children be educated on the dangers and risks of concussions and on recognizing and appropriately addressing concussions.

As the entire nation moves towards establishing an environment of safer play, Connecticut must continue to think proactively about how to best protect young developing minds. This includes limiting contact during sports practices when possible, implementing rule changes to limit or ban drills that make children susceptible to injury, and checking sports equipment regularly to ensure it is fit to protect our youths.

Beyond physical contact, concussion education should be a collaborative effort between guardians, coaches, athletes, and health professions to make sure all parties are well-informed on the symptoms of concussions and other brain injuries. The National Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's HEADS UP campaign advocates for regular training for all parties and posted information on concussion signs, symptoms, and action steps.

Youth concussion laws should be anchored in accountability and best practices if we want to make sure children can participate in athletics without endangering their health. Our laws should ensure the training of all involved parties to best care for young athletes and hold individuals accountable for protecting children. We would recommend that the bill be amended to require the CDC training of all youth coaches prior to executing their duties as coaches and that any immunity provision be limited to those coaches that were trained and acted according to that training, absent any gross negligence.

Regarding H.B 7006, An Act Prohibiting The Inclusion Of Certain Beverages On Children's Menus

The Commission is committed to the nutritional health of the children in our state, and support practices which would help direct children and families towards healthy options, including Raised Bill HB 7006, which would support children's health by ensuring that healthy beverages are the default option in children's meals in restaurants.

Last August, California became the first state to support a "Kid's Meal" bill when it passed SB-1192. Connecticut has an opportunity to join California as a leader of children's health policy. The Commission recommends implementing HB-7006 to guide children and families to healthy nutritional choices and protect children from the dangers of sugar sweetened beverages.

Regarding H.B 7007, An Act Prohibiting the Sale of Energy Drinks to Persons under Sixteen Years of Age

Regarding H.B. 7007, An Act Prohibiting the Sale of Energy Drinks to Persons under Sixteen Years of Age: This bill aims to address a public health concern facing our children. There is growing evidence that energy drinks, when regularly consumed by children, can be

harmful and may lead to negative health, social, emotional, and behavioral outcomes - especially in a person's most formative years. The Commission on Women, Children, and Seniors supports this bill as a measure to keep our children healthy.

While the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) limits caffeine content in soft drinks and soda, categorized as food, the FDA does not regulate caffeine levels in energy drinks, which are classified as "dietary supplements." Caffeine is the main active ingredient in energy drinks: many of them contain 70-80 mg per 8 oz-serving (~3 times the concentration in cola drinks). One cup of coffee contains about 95 mg of caffeine; while some energy drinks contain up to 400 mg of caffeine per can or bottle. Energy drinks often contain additional amounts of caffeine through additives, including guarana, kola nut, yerba mate, and cocoa. Manufacturers are not required to list the caffeine content from these ingredients. Thus, the actual caffeine dose in a single serving may exceed that listed.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the preeminent organization of primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists, and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety, and well-being of infants, children, adolescents, and young adults, has done extensive research on the health effects and impact of energy drinks on children. Studies have shown that energy drinks may have several negative effects on a child's health and physiology, including: increased blood pressure, increased heart rate, increased blood glucose levels, BMI, sleep disturbances, calcium deficiency/poor bone health, increased risk of obesity and diabetes, enamel erosion, irritability, restlessness, and anxiety.

According to self-report surveys, energy drinks are consumed by 30-50% of adolescents and young adults. The AAP recommends that children and adolescents should not consume energy drinks.

"Stimulant-containing energy drinks have no place in the diets of children or adolescents. ... Excessive regular intake of carbohydrate - containing beverages increases overall daily caloric intake without significant additional nutritional value." (American Academy of Pediatrics)

Sources:

- Clinical Report-Sports Drinks and Energy Drinks for Children and Adolescents: Are They Appropriate? Pediatrics Jun 2011, 127 (6) 1182-1189; DOI: 10.1542//preds.2011-0965
- Cleveland Clinic Article <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/why-energy-drinks-and-your-children-dont-mix/>
- UCONN/Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity Study <http://www.uconnruddcenter.org/april-2017-newsletter>
- Seifert, Sara M et al. "Health effects of energy drinks on children, adolescents, and young adults" Pediatrics vol 127 3(2011): 511-28. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3065144/>