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February 26, 2020

**HB 1345 – Youth Sports Programs – Registrations, Personnel, and Policy Information –
Requirements Testimony**

Dear Chairwoman Kaiser, Vice Chair Washington, and members of the Ways and Means Committee,

HB 1345 raises statewide the registration and safety training standards of those responsible for the overseeing our youngest athletes, from pee-pee to pre-teen to those that are already in place at the high school level.

Even at these younger ages, most youth sports programs already maintain a registry of their coaches, staff, and volunteers and their appropriate training, but they vary across the state in terms of what if any basic safety training or background information is required to serve in these roles of authority and supervision.

As young children are more impressionable and generally exercise less agency, their parents and parent surrogates tend to be more directly involved and the requirements more lax, with the expectation that the parents would know and make the final determination as to whether youth sports coaches, athletic trainers, volunteers, officials, and team administrators are qualified to care for, teach and mentor their children. That is certainly a reasonable approach, but because of any number of exposed failings in proper oversight and training have shown, that approach is not the one that serves our children, in aggregate, best.

We do require our high school athletic personnel, and most Parks and Rec leagues in the state and many independent leagues require their coaches and other personnel, to undergo criminal background checks and basic training in concussion awareness. Some require even more. Our younger sports leagues do not share the same expectations and requirements, despite the fact that risk of recreation and sports related injury and exploitation is greater.

This legislation would require youth sports programs for youth athletes under high school level coaches, team administrators, and volunteers to be trained in concussion awareness, child safety

heat illness recognition / prevention / and treatment, to undergo standard background checks as employed by the National Recreation and Parks Association, to keep a registry of such, and require that personnel display I.D. when participating in organized activities.

It also requires that they have return to play policies following head injuries that are public and incorporate play-to-academic activities clearance, and that parents be given information regarding such policies and practices.

If amended, HB1345 would also add uniformity to requirements for protective gear, and institute graduated, sport-specific, activity related head trauma risk exposure because of the higher risk of Traumatic Brain Injury with cumulative trauma in this vulnerable age group.

We all recognize the huge social, emotional, health, developmental and social benefits of youth recreation and sports activities that accrue. We also recognize that with such activity come some risk of injury. We do not, however, have to accept avoidable harm as a necessary cost, or absolve ourselves of any responsibility for the health and safety of our youngest constituents or for improving how we do what we do. I respectfully request adoption of the amendment and a favorable report on the amended bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Terri Hill", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Terri Hill, M.D.