

HB0961_RichardKaplowitz_FAV

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TESTIMONY ON HB#0961- POSITION: FAVORABLE

Public Schools and Youth Sports Programs - Concussion Protocol – Alterations

TO: Chair Wilkins, Vice Chair Feldmark, and members of the Ways and Means Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Keith Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in favor of HB#0961, Public Schools and Youth Sports Programs - Concussion Protocol – Alterations

The National Federation of High School Associations has a document entitled *Suggested guidelines for management of concussion in sports*¹

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury that impairs the function of the brain. It occurs when the brain moves within the skull because of a blow to the head or body. What may appear to be only a mild jolt or blow to the head or body can result in a concussion or other serious brain injury. The understanding of sports-related concussion continues to evolve. We now know that young athletes are particularly vulnerable to the effects of a concussion. Once considered a “ding” to the head, it is now understood that a concussion has the potential to result in a variety of short- or long-term changes in brain function and, rarely, death. What is a concussion? A concussion is a traumatic brain injury that interferes with the normal function of the brain. Simply stated – a concussion results from an injury to the brain, and there is no such thing as a minor brain injury! Concussions should never be referred to as a “ding” or a “bell-ringer.” Any suspected concussion must be taken very seriously.

If an athlete exhibits any signs, symptoms, or behaviors that make you suspicious of a concussion, the athlete must be removed from play and not be allowed to return to play until they are evaluated and cleared by a health-care professional. Failure to remove the athlete from activity puts them at risk for sustaining another 2 head injury while concussed, which can lead to worsening concussion symptoms, increased risk for further injury, and sometimes even death.

This bill will require the State Department of Education to include athletic officials in certain policies and in a certain program to provide awareness on a certain concussion protocol for certain public school and youth sports programs; establishing that certain individuals may remove a student from play and prevent a student from returning to play under certain circumstances; and authorizing a person to bring a certain action for declaratory relief to enforce certain provisions of law.

This bill implements the NFHS recommendations in schools in Maryland and empowers officials to be trained in recognition of concussion possibilities and take affirmative actions for the students protection and evaluation.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB#0961.

¹ <https://assets.nfhs.org/umbraco/media/1020401/suggested-guidelines-for-management-of-concussion-in-sports-april-2019-final.pdf>