

Written testimony of Dr. Benjamin Phipps submitted on March 15, 2013 – SB112

Representative Hansen and members of the House Education Committee,  
Representative Dan Salomon, and supporters of SB112,

I regretfully am unable to attend, in person, this hearing on Senate Bill 112 due to out of town commitments. As a sports medicine physician who regularly treats sports related concussion in all ages and levels of sport from children to professionals and in the settings of sideline event coverage, training room evaluation, and clinical evaluation and management I want to express my full support of SB112 and would strongly encourage you to do the same.

Concussion in sport is a common problem affecting our student athletes in this state and world-wide at an eye-opening incidence. The human brain continues to grow and develop into the mid 20's. Unlike most injuries suffered by young, healthy, growing individuals, brain injury is the one injury in which the growing and developing body actually struggles more with healing and resolution than their adult counterparts.

I see, on a regular basis, young student athletes affected by a concussion several weeks and even months out from their injury. During this time, the injury can affect all aspects of life- social, home, school, sleep, activity, and not just sport. The duration and intensity of symptoms is not predictable, however it is apparent that concussive symptoms tend to be more intense and last longer in situations where a concussed individual is exposed to additional head trauma while still symptomatic.

It is also possible that subsequent head injury, in the setting of current unresolved concussion, can create a life-threatening scenario called "second impact syndrome". It is because of this that bills like SB112 are so important. They provide the foundation and framework to ensure adequate education of coaches, parents, athletes, and administration regarding this injury and improve the early recognition of this injury and appropriate removal from play to prevent subsequent injuries. Additionally, it helps to ensure adequate follow-up and treatment with a well trained physician who can appropriately determine return to play so that premature return does not occur and result in additional risk of subsequent injury.

This bill specifically improves the care and expectations for our student athletes in rural communities, raising the standard of care to a level that each of those individuals deserves when it comes to brain injury. The educational opportunities and means for improving knowledge of this injury are in place to ensure adequate access to appropriate care in the rural communities.

We will never be able to prevent concussions in sport, however we can eliminate recurrent injuries and we owe it to our youth to be their advocates and stand-up for them and their health, by passing SB112 to help ensure early recognition and appropriate management and treatment of head injuries. I would strongly encourage your support and passing of the bill and welcome any questions or concerns regarding this bill or concussions in general.

*Ben Phipps MD, CAQSM, CSCS*

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