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Support  
S. 796

The Hon. Jeffrey Sanchez, House Chair  
The Hon. Susan C. Fargo, Senate Chair  
Joint Committee on Public Health  
State House  
Boston, MA 02133

RE: S 796 AN ACT RELATING TO SAFETY REGULATIONS FOR SCHOOL ATHLETIC PROGRAMS.

August 17, 2009

Dear Representative Sanchez and Senator Fargo,

On behalf of the Massachusetts Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, I would like to strongly support Bill # S 796, the sports concussion bill.

I speak to this particular issue not only as a pediatrician and injury prevention advocate, but also as a youth hockey coach and parent. My experience reinforces what all of who watch youth sports know, that injuries occur frequently, that head injuries are all too common, and most importantly in this context, that the assessment of "readiness to return to play" must be made carefully, in collaboration with health care providers, athletic trainers, and coaches.

In the past, there has been a lack of understanding of the potential long-term effects of repeated minor head trauma. However, it is now known that repeated concussions can lead to permanent memory loss, fatigue, impaired concentration and mood problems. It is also known that the brain is most susceptible to injury in the days and weeks immediately following a previous injury. *Too many players return to play too soon* is the take home message.

Most high school coaches are former athletes; on average, it is 25 years after their playing days. Without updated teaching, they will rely on their own experience, from an era when players just "shook it off" and went back in the game. Unfortunately, we have seen the consequences to a generation who competed in this fashion.

However, coaches care about their student-athletes, and want them to help them to be healthy and successful adults. They have genuine concern for their readiness to play, and usually are very receptive to instruction.

Thanks to the Center for Disease Control, a standardized teaching tool is available to help our schools and student athletes. The use of this tool to teach coaches and athletic trainers will help to increase knowledge, to standardize return to play, and to protect our student athletes.

I hope that you will support this measure, and favorably act upon it.

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Peter T. Lind, M.D.

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Sincerely,



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Chair, Mass Coalition for Adolescent Road Safety  
Co-chair, Belts Ensure a Safer Tomorrow (BEST)

Gregory W. Parkinson, M.D.

Peter T. Lind, M.D.