

Support
S. 796

September 15th, 2009

The Hon. Jeffrey Sanchez, House Chair

The Hon. Susan C. Fargo, Senate Chair

Dear Representative Sanchez and Senator Fargo:

As the Injury Prevention Coordinator of Boston Medical Center, I write today to support Senate Bill 796.

Working together with The Massachusetts Prevent Injuries Now! Network, Boston Medical Center joined the efforts to begin aggressive promotion of the CDC's "heads up" youth sports concussion prevention materials over the past year.

To date, BMC has successfully distributed over 200 kits through our awareness program to school coaches and parents of children playing sports throughout Massachusetts.

The CDC recently updated their estimate of sports and recreation concussion in the United States from 300,000 to between 1.6 and 3.8 million. The jump represents the new understanding that concussions are rarely reported to medical professionals due to a lack of understanding regarding the significance of a mild traumatic brain injury. For those that are diagnosed, MDPH's Injury Surveillance data indicates that sports and recreation-related traumatic brain injuries result in nearly 1,400 emergency department visits each year among high school age youth (ages 15-18). Another 1,305 children aged 9-14 are taken to emergency rooms with sports or recreation-related TBIs. In addition, another 99 children between the ages of 9 and 18 suffered brain injuries severe enough to require hospitalization.

Recent consensus statements state that proper concussion diagnosis and management is key to preventing negative outcomes. Return to play during the 'window of vulnerability' after a concussion - where a secondary injury can exacerbate the first - often prevents student-athletes from achieving in school and can cause sudden death from second-impact syndrome.

There is also a growing appreciation, spearheaded by a new research center at Boston University School of Medicine, a partner of Boston Medical Center, that repetitive brain trauma in sports can result in a devastating Alzheimer's-like neurodegenerative disease called Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy, also known as "punch drunk syndrome." Previously only well-studied in boxers, the disease has recently been identified in football and hockey players, one as young as 18 years-old.

It is of utmost importance, for the future safety of our state's children, that we continue our campaign to get the CDC's "heads up" youth sports concussion prevention materials out to every Emergency Room director, trauma prevention director, youth coach and school nurse in our Commonwealth.

Senate bill, 796 will support this as well as the development of an active training mechanism through which youth coaches and others involved in the care of athletes would be required to prove competence in understanding proper diagnosis and management of concussion.

We see, first hand, sports concussion related injuries at Boston Medical Center and the need for education around proper concussion diagnosis and management for student athletes in their schools. We write to strongly support Senate Bill 796.

Sincerely,
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